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Senate reaffirms allegiance to King

AMMAN (Petra) — The Senate on Wednesday reaffirmed its allegiance to His Majesty King Abdullah and pledged to back his leadership following in the footsteps of his father King Hussein. Senate President Zeid Rifai conveyed the Senate's stand during a meeting with King Abdullah at Raghadan Palace, where he congratulated him on assuming responsibility for the nation. Rifai and the senators reaffirmed their full support for King Abdullah and HRH Crown Prince Hamzah.

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Grenade game turns deadly for Thai soldier

BANGKOK (AFP) — A young Thai soldier was killed Wednesday and two of his comrades injured when a hand grenade they were playing with at their Bangkok barracks exploded, army officials said. Private Promchai Piyabut, 21, was pronounced dead while on the way to a military hospital. Army officials said the young conscript had smuggled the M-67 grenade into the signals installation in a Bangkok suburb and into his dormitory, where he and two others were playing with when it exploded.

Crash in Andes leaves 9 dead

LIMA (AP) — A bus skidded off a road slick with rain and rolled down a precipice in Peru's central Andes on Wednesday, killing nine people and injuring 20, police said. Heavy rains caused the bus to plunge into 120-metre-deep ravine in Huancavelica, 220 kilometres southeast of Lima, police spokesman Edgar Guerrero said. Heavy rains have pounded the region for several days, causing traffic accidents and blocking highways in central Peru, police said.

School evacuated as 'killer bees' attack

MEXICO CITY (R) — An attack of so-called killer bees sparked panic at an elementary school in the Mexican resort of Acapulco and sent 10 children and two teachers to the hospital with stings, news broadcast said on Wednesday. Pupils, teachers and neighbours were evacuated from the area in the southwestern coastal town after the Africanised bees, which attack in great numbers at the slightest provocation, descended on the school grounds on Tuesday, Televisa said. Police sped to the Acapulco school as the bees swarmed. A total of at least 30 children were injured.

El Nino linked to horse epidemic

LONDON (R) — British scientists have discovered a link between the El Nino weather phenomenon and deadly horse epidemics in South Africa. In a report in the science journal Nature on Wednesday, researchers from the Institute of Animal Health showed that climate changes resulting from El Nino caused a population explosion of the biting midge, the insect that spreads African Horse Sickness (AHS). They warned that the increasing frequency of El Nino, a warming of the eastern tropical Pacific that causes havoc with weather systems, could result in an increase in other diseases spread by flying insects, including those that affect humans.

Che's wedding certificate stolen

MEXICO CITY (R) — The certificate from revolutionary icon Ernesto "Che" Guevara's 1955 marriage to a Peruvian has been stolen from a Mexican public records office, officials said. Argentine-born Guevara spent more than two years in Mexico before joining an expedition to Cuba of rebels led by Fidel Castro who overthrew dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. "I wonder what the Mexican government will do when Argentina and Cuba lay claim to the wedding certificate," local public records director Teresa Cervantes told journalists late on Tuesday. Cervantes said authorities were questioning six employees in connection with the document from the public records office at Tepozotlan, 60 kilometres northwest of Mexico City.

Three killed after police van seized

By Tareq Ayyoub

DABA'A — Two policemen and a prisoner were killed on Wednesday during the hijacking of a police van on the south-bound lane of the Desert Highway, a security official said.

The official, who asked not to be named, said corporals Mohammad Daifallah and Mahmoud Farabee, who were escorting two prisoners back to Swaga Correctional Facility near Giza district, were overpowered and later killed inside the van by the prisoners.

A statement by the Public Security Department said that Mohammad Omar Jaghameen and Abdullah Mohammad Suleiman, who are standing trial for the murders of 12 people in 1998, overpowered their guards in the van and grabbed their guns.

"Guards in an escort van driving close to the prisoner van succeeded in controlling the situation and preventing them from fleeing the scene," the statement, carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said. The statement said police back-up forces were rushed to the scene of the incident, 50 kilometres south of Amman. "But the prisoners started shooting at the police from the van and refused to surrender," the statement said.

At 3:20 p.m. police stormed the vehicle and arrested Jaghameen. Suleiman was taken away with serious injuries and was later reported dead, according to Petra.

A large number of police officers were called to the scene, where the hijacked police van lay turned over on its side in a ditch on the north-bound side of the highway.

Security officials declined to give further details about the incident and to explain how the van overturned into the ditch.

Police prohibited journalists from getting close to the scene of the incident and two reporters, two cameramen, and a photographer were detained for around one hour at a nearby police station. Police confiscated their video tapes and films.

His Majesty King Abdullah and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hamzah visited the headquarters of the Public Security Department in Abdali to enquire about the incident. The King later visited Al Hussein Medical Centre to check on the condition of those injured in the shoot-out, Petra said. There were no details reported about who the injured were and how they were injured.

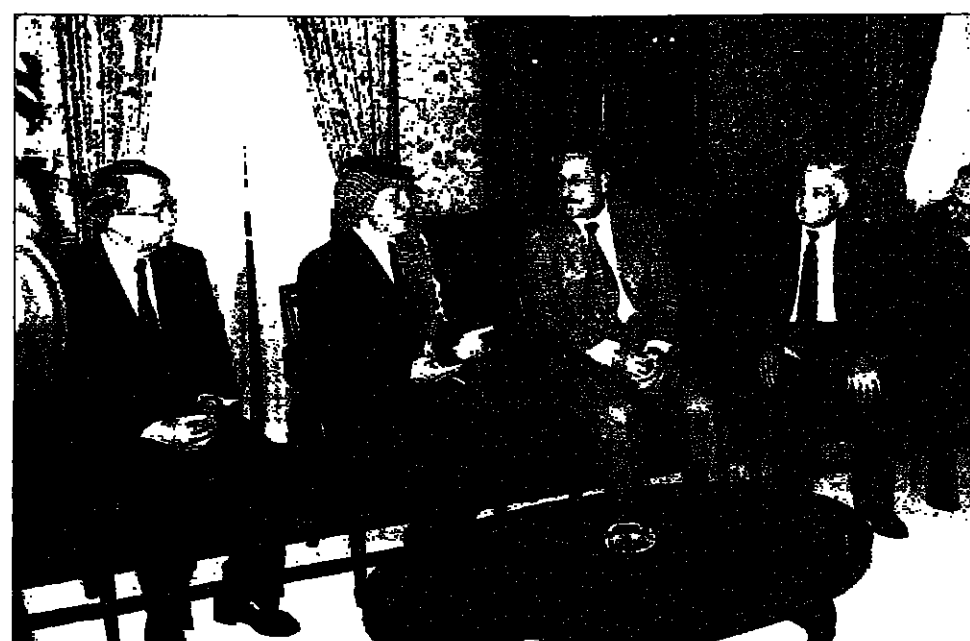
Interior Minister Nayef Qadi,

who arrived at the scene of the incident, said the "criminal who committed this heinous crime will receive his punishment which he deserves" according to law.

Jaghameen and Suleiman were among six suspects accused of killing nine people in the Rabia neighbourhood of Amman in January 1998, including an Iraqi diplomat, as well as another three people in the Shmeisani district in April of the same year.

A Special Forces team, headed by then Prince Abdullah, routed out the suspects from their hideout in Sahab in mid-1998. Two of the suspects were arrested and three were killed in the raid on the house.

A fourth suspect, who was not in the house, is believed to have fled the country to Europe, and is being tried in absentia.



His Majesty King Abdullah meets Wednesday with a visiting delegation representing Palestinian businessmen (Petra photo)

King receives condolences from Palestinian delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah received at Raghadan Palace on Wednesday a delegation representing Palestinian businessmen who offered condolences on the passing away of King Hussein.

The King and the delegation members discussed cooperation between Jordanian and Palestinian businessmen and obstacles obstructing bilateral trade.

King Abdullah expressed appreciation to the delegation for expressing their sympathy and underlined the need for

further efforts to overcome impediments to trade relations. Present at the meeting was Hamdi Tabbaa, chairman of the Jordan Businessmen Association.

Also Wednesday, King Abdullah received Sheikh Mustahl Ben Ahmad Al Muashni, an advisor to Oman's Sultan Qaboos, who offered condolences on the passing of King Hussein.

The King expressed appreciation to Sultan Qaboos and the Omani government and people for their solidarity with Jordan.

King Abdullah also received condolences from Sadeq Mahdi, a former Sudanese prime minister.

On Wednesday, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid and Prince Zeid Ben Shaker Wednesday visited the grave of the late King, where they laid wreaths and recited verses of the Holy Koran.

Jordanians from around the country and representatives of various organisations including journalists and students also visited the grave of the late King at the Royal Cemetery.

Opening export markets remains Jordan's 'biggest challenge' — PM

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on Wednesday told Parliament that recent pledges by Arab and friendly countries have not translated into concrete figures and said the country's "biggest challenge" was to open markets for Jordanian exports.

Addressing the Lower House during a regular session, Tarawneh said "political reasons" may be behind the closure of some foreign markets to Jordanian-made products, in the past decade.

"The engine of [economic] development is the export sector, and in many cases we cannot rule out political reasons behind the opening or closure of foreign markets to Jordanian products," the premier told Parliament members.

"This puts a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of the government and producers... to be able to compete

with other [foreign] products," Tarawneh said.

The prime minister indicated that the government was in contact with Arab and foreign states who pledged to extend loans and economic assistance to Jordan following the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7.

But so far, "we are not aware of the volume of [financial] assistance nor their intentions," the premier said.

Tarawneh was referring to pledges by Saudi Arabia, the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates to extend financial assistance to help the Kingdom face its economic hardships.

"There are serious talks with [foreign] funds, especially Arab funds, to finance some projects, which is in line with what we describe as [foreign] assistance," the premier added.

He said that among the projects holding top priority are the plan to pump water from

southern Jordan to the capital, and potash and phosphate export projects.

Tarawneh added that Arab investors, especially from the Gulf region, are expected to arrive here to explore investment opportunities.

He said debt servicing will consume \$812 million of the annual budget, amounting to 28 per cent of the budget or nine per cent of the national income.

Tarawneh said the large number of world leaders who flocked to the country to attend the funeral of King Hussein was a "political message" that showed the importance of the country and the late King.

During the session, Deputy Mansour Ben Tarif urged the government to prepare a list of projects that could benefit from debt swap arrangements.

Ben Tarif was referring to German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's statement that he will urge G-7 leaders to help

in scrapping or swapping the debts of some Third World countries.

He said the government should prepare plans for new projects that relate to the water, phosphate and potash sectors.

Meanwhile, Tarawneh hinted that the government was ready to review its decision to lift food subsidies and noted that a meeting will be held soon to discuss the issue.

The premier indicated that the proposed meeting is expected to include government officials and members of the economic and finance committees of Parliament.

"There is a real intention to discuss this issue and reach joint agreement [with the lawmakers]," Tarawneh told deputies.

His statement followed repeated demands by lawmakers to reverse the decision the government adopted last year, which included lifting subsidies on bread and other staple foodstuffs.

Ocalan trial raises human rights concerns

LONDON (R) — The world will be watching the trial of captured Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan as a test of Turkey's much criticised human rights record, and first signs are not encouraging, campaigners say.

Many Western governments, while relieved that an embarrassing international game of pass-the-parcel over Ocalan was over, have insisted that he be given a fair, public trial.

Given Turkey's documented record of torture of Kurdish guerrilla suspects, secret trials by state security courts and lack of an internationally accepted appeals procedure, human rights groups say they fear the worst.

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit dismissed concerns voiced by France, Italy and Switzerland, saying: "Nobody can deny Turkey has an independent and functioning legal system. No European country has the right to lecture us on this subject."

But even the United States, Ankara's close ally which worked to help the Turks grab Ocalan, tempered delight at his arrest with a plea for even-handed justice.

"We certainly trust that Turkey will conduct a fair and open trial in a manner consistent with international standards of due process. We don't have any reason to expect otherwise. But certainly the world community will be looking forward to a trial of that nature," State Department spokesman James Foley said.

The European Commission, in a progress review last



Captured Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan under the close watchful eye of a masked guard aboard an aircraft bringing him back to Turkey and believed taken in the early hours of Tuesday after he was arrested by Turkish intelligence agents. This photo was taken by an intelligence officer aboard the flight and made available Wednesday (AFP photo)

November on Turkey's application for membership, criticised "persistent violations of human rights and important deficiencies in the treatment of minorities," such as the Kurds. Human rights and civilian control over the military are two major sticking points in Ankara's bid to eventually join the EU.

The European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly upheld complaints from Turkish Kurds on torture and the destruction of property, accepting that the Turkish legal system did not provide adequate remedy.

Pressure group Amnesty International wrote to Ecevit urging that Ocalan be given immediate and unhindered

access to a lawyer of his choice and that "all necessary steps be taken to assure his physical integrity" — a euphemism for not torturing him.

"Since all the world will be watching his trial, we would hope they would take every step to ensure it is not only fair but seen to be fair," said Anne Burley, director of Amnesty's European regional programme.

Amnesty said in November that Turkey's shaky human rights record had shown signs of improvement since March 1997.

However, Ocalan's defence has not had an easy start.

Israeli guards shoot 3 Kurds dead in Berlin

BERLIN (R) — Israeli guards fired at Kurds storming Israel's consulate in Berlin on Wednesday, killing three people in the worst violence since protests swept Europe over Turkey's capture of rebel Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Police said up to 16 people were wounded. Kurdish witnesses said one was an 11-year-old boy.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli security guards had fired in self-defence.

He told a news conference that dozens of Kurds, some with hammers and clubs, broke in and took a woman hostage. She was freed after German authorities negotiated her release.

"We are sorry when lives are lost but we are committed to protecting Israeli citizens wherever they may be and Israeli facilities anywhere in the world," Netanyahu added.

Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) said the shooting deaths of the three Kurds were the result of a "dirty war" conducted by allies Turkey and Israel against the Kurds.

Israel shut its diplomatic missions in Europe for the day, and the United States urged Americans travelling abroad to take special security precautions.

Germany is home to 500,000 Kurds and more than two million Turks, the largest such populations in Europe. There are an estimated 15 million to 20 million Kurds worldwide.

Ocalan faces trial and a possible death sentence for his part

in a 14-year-old separatist struggle in Turkey's southeast that has cost more than 29,000 lives.

Turkish television reported on Wednesday that Turkish forces had advanced into the Kurdish-held enclave of northern Iraq in a thrust designed to strike at Ocalan's guerrillas.

As his supporters kept up protests in European cities, Turkish television showed the first footage of the rebel leader since he was flown to Turkey from Kenya on Monday under mysterious circumstances.

Handcuffed and tied up in an aircraft seat, he grimaced as masked Turkish special forces captors questioned him. "Abdullah Ocalan, welcome home," said one.

"You are our guest from now on."

"Thank you," said Ocalan. "I really love Turkey and the Turkish people."

Earlier on Wednesday Turkey accused Greece of giving it "incorrect and misleading" information on Ocalan, who was captured after sheltering in the Greek embassy in Nairobi.

Turkey's relations with Greece are already strained over Cyprus and over Aegean territorial rights. Greece has denied helping Ocalan's rebels.

In London, Kurdish protesters said they were on hunger strike inside the Greek embassy and would set themselves on fire if police stormed the building.

Around 15 to 20 Kurds forced their way into the Geneva headquarters of the United



The body of one of three Kurds killed in an attempt to storm the Israeli consulate in Berlin is carried away by paramedics on Wednesday (AFP photo)

Nations refugee agency UNHCR but left after three hours later after a UNHCR spokesman read a statement outlining their demands.

Kurdish demonstrators who had been occupying a conference room in the nearby European headquarters of the United Nations since Tuesday left under a police escort.

Some 60 protesters were holding a policeman at the Greek consulate in Zurich and the Greek embassy in Bern was also still occupied. Kurds also entered the Vienna headquarters of Austria's governing Social Democrats on Wednesday.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued on page 2)

Sharon faces probe in fraud case

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli police said on Wednesday they would question Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon in a case of suspected fraud involving testimony on his behalf by a former army general at a 1997 libel trial.

Police questioned businessman Avigdor Ben Gal, the retired major-general, on Tuesday about his testimony in Sharon's suit against an Israeli newspaper that accused Sharon of deception in his conduct of Israel's 1982 Lebanon invasion.

Under investigation is a possible link between Ben-Gal's June 1997 testimony and a trip to Russia two weeks earlier he made with Sharon, then national infrastructure minister, to explore a possible deal to bring natural gas to Israel.

Police said in a statement that they would question Sharon, 71, when he returned

from the United States where his wife is undergoing medical tests.

Police said they were investigating suspicions of fraud, breach of trust and obstruction of justice. Ben-Gal and Sharon's attorney both publicly denied any link between the Russia trip and the subsequent testimony.

"These things are baseless," said Sharon's attorney Yaacov Weinroth.

Sharon brought the libel suit against the liberal newspaper Ha'aretz for a report in 1991 that the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin felt misled by Sharon, his defence minister, over the planned scope of the 1982 Lebanon invasion.

Ben-Gal's testimony at trial on Sharon's behalf contradicted a statement Ben-Gal made in 1987 at a Tel Aviv university conference.

Ben-Gal told the conference

that the Lebanon war was based on a secret plan of the defence minister and army chief which had not been approved. At the trial, Ben-Gal said he had been mistaken.

Ha'aretz won the suit in November 1997 in any event and last year filed a complaint that prompted the police investigation.

"We are speaking of a complaint by an interest group [Ha'aretz] locked in a legal battle with minister Sharon. We're speaking of a complaint without hands, without legs, and I hope that within a few days all will be cleared up," Weinroth, Sharon's attorney, told Israel Radio.

Israeli police commissioner Yehuda Wilk denied any connection between the police investigation and Israel's May 17 general election. He said the probe was launched months before anyone knew

elections would be moved up from late 2000.

Police said their inquiry was in its final stages.

Sharon lost his suit when the Tel Aviv district court ruled there had been grounds for Ha'aretz reporter Uzi Ben-Zion to conclude that Begin knew Sharon had deceived him about how far Israeli troops would push north in Lebanon.

Begin quit suddenly as prime minister in August 1983 in the face of mounting Israeli casualties, saying simply: "I cannot go on." He withdrew from public life and died in 1992, aged 78.

The Israeli army eventually reached Beirut and pulled the bulk of its troops out of Lebanon only in 1985 after 650 Israelis and thousands of Lebanese were killed in the campaign, the most unpopular war of Israel's history.



Two Eritrean soldiers peer from their shelter Wednesday as they have a rest at the frontline of Assab. Pressure was mounting for the reworking of a peace plan as fighting continues on the eastern front of the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Ethiopian planes made a second raid against Harsale, an Eritrean army logistical base 20-km west of the Red Sea port of Assab (AFP photo)

Turkey says ready to answer any Iraqi threat

ANKARA (R) — Turkey said on Wednesday it was ready to answer any threat by southern neighbour Iraq in a row over Western warplanes patrolling Iraqi no-fly zones.

The United States has already warned Baghdad to expect swift action if it attacked the bases in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia or Turkey from where U.S. and British planes patrol the zones in northern and southern Iraq.

"We have shown in the past that we are ready to meet and

respond to any threats that are directed towards us," foreign ministry spokesman Sermet Atacani told a news briefing.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein warned the country's two southern neighbours on Sunday about the use of the bases.

Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan on Monday echoed the warnings. "This is a war and aggression against Iraq which has its known consequences," he said.

Ramadan said in remarks

broadcast on Tuesday that his country distinguished between bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and at Incirlik in southern Turkey.

But Radio Monte Carlo reported him as saying in an interview that "if Incirlik keeps being used to attack Iraq, the threats of an Iraqi response may also affect it."

The Turkish spokesman described the Iraqi remarks as "inappropriate, incorrect and unsuitable for neighbourly rela-

tions" between Iraq and Turkey.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz failed this week in a personal appeal to persuade Turkey to halt the Western flights from Incirlik.

Atacani said repeated bombings by U.S. and British forces in the northern no-fly zone were not acts of aggression.

The planes have patrolled northern Iraq since the 1991 Gulf War to protect the Kurds from attack by Iraqi government forces.

Israeli guards shoot 3 Kurds dead in Berlin

(Continued from page 1)

About 15 Kurds broke into the offices of Germany's governing Social Democratic Party in Hamburg, taking a staff member hostage. German police said they suspected attacks on Turkish cultural centres, a mosque and a restaurant.

Twenty-six Kurds were arrested after they stormed the European commission's offices in central Copenhagen and occupied the building briefly.

Kenya said it had closed its embassies worldwide in case of attacks.

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit said Ocalan's trial would be fair and could proceed quickly.

He told CNN television Ocalan had been taken to the Imrali prison island in the sea of Marmara from where the other

inmates were being evacuated. "At least for a time he will be there, which will be a very secure place for him," he said.

But in Amsterdam Ocalan's main defence lawyer, Britta Boehler, told Reuters she feared Turkish jailers might torture or even kill her client.

Turkish newspapers said Ocalan had left the Greek embassy in Nairobi on Monday, accompanied by what were apparently Kenyan officials, believing he was flying to refuge in the Netherlands.

On his way to the airport, Turkish special forces apprehended him, either with or without Kenyan complicity, the papers said. They said the Greeks had probably been unaware of the operation but had agreed to eject Ocalan from their embassy.

Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos told

parliament that Ocalan had ignored Greek advice by trusting Kenyan authorities.

The United States has rejected suggestions that it gave Ankara intelligence reports of Ocalan's whereabouts or helped the operation. But the Turkish daily Yeni Yuzul said Washington had helped Ankara in return for rebuffing Iraqi demands for an end to air patrols over Iraq from Turkish bases.

In Nairobi, an official said Kenyan authorities had put Ocalan on a flight out of the country, contradicting the government's earlier assertions that it played no role in his capture and transfer to Turkey.

Principal immigration officer Frank Kwanga also said Kenya was holding four associates of Ocalan and investigating them for entering the country illegally.

Trial opens for former Iranian minister

TEHRAN (AFP) — The trial for defamation of a minister in Iran's first post-revolutionary government opened in Tehran on Tuesday, but neither he nor his defence team were present.

Abbas Amir-Entezam, regarded as a liberal, was detained in September after making critical statements

about the former head of the Evin prison near Tehran, Assadollah Ladjvardi, who was assassinated in August.

Amir-Entezam has already served a 17-year sentence for spying, a charge he always denied, and is considered the country's longest-serving political prisoner. He had enjoyed only a brief spell of freedom

before his arrest.

"We don't know when the verdict will be delivered, or even if there will be one," his wife Elaheh said.

A number of human rights organisations have expressed their support for Amir-Entezam, and last year he was awarded the Austrian Bruno Kreisky prize for human rights.

Ocalan trial raises concerns

(Continued from page 1)

International lawyers working for Ocalan, led by Dutch-based German Attorney Britta Boehler, were turned back at Istanbul airport and refused entry into Turkey on Tuesday, a spokeswoman for his German lawyers said.

Amnesty and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) said they would try to attend his trial but the Turkish foreign ministry said international observers would not be permitted.

Ecevit said Ocalan was being held at an island prison in the sea of Marmara and his interrogation had already started.

Asked when the trial would start and how long it would last, he said: "It need not last too long because all the unlawful actions, the crimes of the PKK leadership are known."

Given such statements, human rights activists are concerned that Ocalan will be presumed guilty until proven innocent.

Some campaigners said the nature of Ocalan's extra-legal abduction from Kenya was problematic in itself, while others said Turkey was entitled to capture and try him.

"There is a big question mark about how they assumed jurisdiction over him. It certainly was not a legal way of extradition," said Mona Rishmawi of the Geneva-based

ICJ.

"In the light of these circumstances, can he have a fair trial?" Rishmawi said it was vital that Ocalan be tried by a civilian court and not a security court, and that hearings be held in public, not in camera — the normal procedure for security courts.

Amnesty's Burley said the London-based human rights group did not oppose Ocalan being brought to trial and had criticised abuses by PKK members.

However, she said Amnesty was very concerned about cases of people being convicted in Turkey on the basis of confessions or statements by witnesses extracted by torture.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Break-out from Kuwaiti jail foiled

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Security sources have discovered a 70-metre tunnel dug by prisoners to break out of Kuwait's central jail, a newspaper said Wednesday. "Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officers found a tunnel 70 metres long and three metres deep that the prisoners were planning to use to escape," a security source told Al Rai Al Aam newspaper. "They were only two days away from finishing," the source added.

Two Saudi beheaded for murder

RIYADH (AP) — Two Saudi men convicted of murder were beheaded in Saudi Arabia Wednesday, the interior ministry said. Hatthal Ben Mawar Al Shamari was executed in the central city of Hail after he was found guilty of shooting to death Sayer Ben Ali Al Shamari, a fellow Saudi, following an argument.

'Iraq executed 15 prisoners'

CAIRO (AP) — The Iraqi government has executed 15 political detainees in a prison near the capital Baghdad, an Iraqi opposition group said Wednesday. The prisoners, 11 civilians and four military officers, were executed Dec. 26 in Abu Ghraib prison, said the Centre for Human Rights, which is part of the Iraqi Communist Party.

Israelis raid Lebanon

TYRE (AP) — Israeli jets fired at least one missile at a suspected guerrilla base on Tuesday, apparently in retaliation for an attack on an Israeli outpost earlier in the day. Lebanese security officials said. Guerrillas threw grenades and fired automatic rifles at an Israeli outpost in Blatt, which is five kilometres from the Israeli border, at about 4 p.m. local time, the officials said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 477311-19
PROGRAMME TWO
Thursday/Friday Programmes

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc - Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc - National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:54Fajr
06:12(Sunrise) Doha
11:50Dhuhr
14:58Asr
17:57Maghreb
18:45Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish. Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624833/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5683404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifish Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

min. partly cloudy, winds southerly moderate, and seas rough.

Amman06/12
Aqaba10/18
Deserts06/16
Jordan Valley10/19

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

A cold air front accompanied by a depression is expected to affect the Kingdom on Thursday. Clouds will build up at different altitudes with rain falling over all areas. Winds will be southwesterly active occasionally accompanied by gusts. On Friday, it will be cold, cloudy, rainy with a chance of snow falling over areas 1,100 metres above sea level. Winds will be westerly active. In Aqaba, it will be

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 21, Aqaba 23
Humidity readings: Amman 18 per cent, Aqaba 42 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun03/07
Jerash06/14
Um Qays06/13
Madaba04/12
Petra03/13
Dead Sea12/21

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abbas Al Haidan4885446
Dr. Anfal Al Ashhab5602507
Dr. Ayman Al Muhtashab4875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah5347351
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004

Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Mohammad Al Sharf (02)7100588
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Mazen Saffarini (05)985832
Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Rescue Police 192-462111, 4657777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic police4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4894967
Amman Municipality Complaints4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs5661176

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdi5666131/7
Husein Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642381/6
Akileh Maternity4642341/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 477101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Arnal Hospital09986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital09990990

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdi5666131/7
Husein Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642381/6
Akileh Maternity4642341/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 477101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Arnal Hospital09986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital09990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Ali Nafes Hospital027101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital027102831, (02)7103100
Speciality Hospital027103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Sanaa (RJ)
08:25Bombay (RJ)
08:50Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
10:05Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:35Colombo (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25London (RJ)
18:05Kuwait (RJ)
18:05Athens (RJ)
19:00 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
19:40Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
23:30Lamaca (RJ)

Other Flights
13:15Riyadh (SV)
14:05Rome (AZ)
14:10Sharjah (AH)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:55Dubai (EK)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
10:35 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
11:00Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
11:45Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:00Amsterdam, Paris (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
For Thursday
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
09:35 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

For Friday
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
09:35 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

Other Flights
06:30Damasus, London (BA)
07:10Frankfurt (LH)
14:45Riyadh (SV)
15:00Annabab, Algiers (AH)
15:30Rome (AZ)
15:35Doha (QR)
17:00Damasus, Dubai (EK)
18:15 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
20:00Beirut (ME)
21:10Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
01:55Moscow (SU)
02:15Amsterdam (KL)
04:45Alexandria (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
For Thursday
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
19:45 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:15 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
21:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)
21:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

For Friday
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:15 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Her Majesty Queen

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Her Majesty Queen Noor receives Hanan Ashrawi at Bab Al Salam, yesterday (Petra photo)

Queen receives Ashrawi, Omani sheikh and Sheikh Yamani

AMMAN (JT) — Her Majesty Queen Noor on Wednesday received former Palestinian National Authority minister Hanan Ashrawi at Bab Al Salam.

Ashrawi, who came to Jordan to condole the Royal Family over the passing of His Majesty King Hussein, said the late monarch was a "unique phenomenon — a man ahead of his time and a treasure for everyone."

She reiterated President Yasser Arafat's condolences to the Queen, adding that King Hussein's death has exacerbated the "global crisis in leadership."

Queen Noor said that all of King Hussein's children are committed to carrying out his "legacy of love, humanity and humility," adding that the King felt lucky that in his lifetime he "knew the love of his people, which was shown to him in extraordinary ways."

The Queen and Ashrawi discussed the peace process, the upcoming Israeli elections and Ashrawi's "Palestinian

Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH)." Ashrawi, who is the founder and secretary general of MIFTAH, expressed her hope that the initiative could count on the Queen's support as a "proponent and supporter of humanitarian policies."

Later, Queen Noor received Omani Sheikh Mustahel Al Ma'shani, his wife, sons and daughter at Bab Al Salam.

Sheikh Mustahel, who is Sultan Qaboos' uncle and the state advisor, said "we always remember King Hussein in our hearts." The Queen described King Hussein's great and deep affection for Sultan Qaboos and the people of Oman.

Queen Noor also received former Saudi oil minister Sheikh Mohammed Zaki Yamani and his family at Bab Al Salam.

Prince Hamzah meets with Omani sheikh

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hamzah on Wednesday received Sheikh Mustahel Al Ma'shani, uncle of Sultan Qaboos of Oman, at the office of His Majesty the late King Hussein at Bab Al Salam.

Sheikh Mustahel, who was accompanied by his two sons, expressed their grief and the sorrow of the people of Oman for King Hussein's death.

Prince Hamzah said that "no words can describe our feelings of appreciation for your visit and your support" and affirmed that "His Majesty King Abdullah has constantly said we are brothers and will do anything to support and help in any way we can."

Later, Queen Noor and Prince Hamzah visited the Royal Cemetery, where they prayed at King Hussein's grave.

U.S. congressman pledges continued aid

AMMAN (J.T.) — Visiting U.S. Congressman Sam Gejdenson on Wednesday said Washington will continue to provide aid to Jordan under His Majesty King Abdullah in order to help it pursue a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh, Gejdenson, a vocal supporter of Jordan, paid tribute to the late King Hussein saying that his policies were instrumental in helping to solve the region's problems because he was a man of vision and wisdom which earned him the respect of the world.

A Democrat from Connecticut and the second ranking member of the influential House International Relations Committee, Gejdenson on Tuesday offered condolences to King Abdullah.

He told the press on Wednesday that the U.S. Congress will help Jordan by endorsing economic aid to the Kingdom.

He added he was optimistic that the endorsement would come soon.

Gejdenson also met Wednesday with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabneh at the Jordan Armed Forces Headquarters to review developments in the region and issues of common concern.

Gejdenson, who is said to be supportive of peace process and Oslo, met Tuesday with Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib.

"Mr. Gejdenson's visit is very important to Jordan. We consider him a key member of Congress with whom Jordan hopes to maintain a strong working relationship on issues of mutual interest," said Rania Atalla, Director of the Jordan Information Bureau in Washington. Atalla, who accompanied the congressman to some of his meetings while in Amman, said, "We see his visit as an expression of support for Jordan, and the Kingdom's role in the peace process. Congressman Gejdenson got to see first-hand the solidarity of Jordan's institutions, and his visit added to his confidence regarding the stability and continuity of the Kingdom."

Arab diplomats in Washington say that while he is also considered a supporter of Israel he holds reasonable views on the Middle East and brings sobriety to the Middle East debate in Congress.

If the Democrats win in the next congressional elections in November 2000, he will most likely become chairperson of the International Relations Committee. He opposed the use of force in 1990-1991 Gulf crisis and supported the enlargement of NATO in 1998.

Gejdenson met with the late King Hussein in Washington several times and praised Jordan's role in advancing Middle East peace. Ambassador to Jordan William Burns accompanied the congressman to his meetings in Amman.

CPJ presses Kuwait to release journalists

NEW YORK (J.T.) — The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) yesterday urged Kuwait's emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah to use his power of amnesty to free five journalists including two Jordanians currently serving life sentences for their work with the Iraqi occupation newspaper Al Nida, a CPJ statement said.

The letter was sent in advance of the Kuwaiti leader's anticipated annual pardon of prisoners on National Day (February 25) and Liberation Day (February 20).

The five journalists — Abdul Rahman Al Hussein, Usamah Subail Abdallah Hussein, Fawwaz Muhammad Al Awadi Bessiso, Ahmad Abed Mustafa, and Ibtisam Berto Suleiman Al Dakhlil — were convicted by a martial law tribunal in June 1991 for their work with Al Nida, a newspaper that was set up by Iraqi forces shortly after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The trial of the five journalists, which began on May 19, 1991, fell well short of international fair trial standards, according to international human rights organizations, the statement said.

According to the statement, the defendants have said that they were tortured during their interrogations. Their defence — that they were coerced to work for the Iraqi newspaper — was not rebutted by prosecutors, CPJ said.

The four men and one woman (Al Dakhlil) worked in positions including reporter, editor, and proofreader at the Iraqi publication. Aside from the two Jordanians, there are also one Kuwaiti, and one Palestinian imprisoned.

At least 17 journalists were convicted of "collaboration" and sentenced to prison terms as a result of their work with Al Nida following the Gulf War, CPJ said.

In recent years, Kuwait authorities have released 12 of them, several in conjunction with the emir's annual amnesty.

"Since 1992, Kuwait has been the leading jailer of journalists in the Arab World because of the ongoing imprisonment of journalists forced to work for Al Nida," said CPJ's executive director, Ann K. Cooper. "It is past time for the emir to grant amnesty to the five remaining jailed journalists."

Muslim Brotherhood requests audience with King Abdullah

By Khalil Al Shobaki

AMMAN — The Muslim Brotherhood have requested an audience with His Majesty King Abdullah to discuss issues of concern to the Islamic movement and other questions of national interest. The Brotherhood's overall leader Abdul Majid Thneibat said Wednesday.

The movement's members have received clear signs from the Royal Court assuring them of the continued relationship that bonded them with the late King Hussein, Thneibat said. He described that relationship as not merely personal but also a firm strategic association stemming from a reciprocal vision between the Brotherhood, the King and the Royal family, said Thneibat.

The Muslim Brotherhood plans to discuss with the King national issues in an extensive framework on the basis of the "comprehensive revision" which the late King had referred to before passing away, according to Thneibat. He added that King Hussein had realized that Jordan was in need of such revision of its policies.

Paying tribute to King Hussein, Thneibat said the Muslim Brotherhood will never forget the late King's wisdom and his understanding of the Brotherhood's stands as well as his good treatment of its members, something which will always be highly valued.

"We will never forget the late King's keenness on the continuation of the Islamic movement during the past 50 years which witnessed no confrontation between the two sides, something that distinguished him from the rest of the Arab and Islamic regimes which have persecuted and repressed the Islamic groups," said Thneibat. "We hope King Abdullah will follow the same policy towards the Muslim Brotherhood as that

adopted by his father."

Thneibat said one of the first priorities for the Islamic movement is a safeguarding of the country's stability and security, stressing that consolidating political stability and strengthening the domestic front is an integrated and firm policy of the Muslim Brotherhood.

"As an Islamic movement, we feel that under the present circumstances we should advocate reforms through peaceful and democratic means," he pointed out adding that the Muslim Brotherhood considers public freedoms the main factor in enhancing national unity and boosting the country's strength.

On the political level, he said, the Muslim Brotherhood believes that it is a priority to activate the role of the political parties and civic society institutions within the framework of the Political Parties Law and the Constitution; and the government should open the door for these political groups to express their own stands because this is in the nation's interest.

Turning to general elections, Thneibat said "the decision (of the Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm the Islamic Action Front Party) to boycott the 1997 elections was taken under certain political circumstances, particularly the government's stand vis-à-vis the Islamic movement at the time and also because the government had introduced the one-person-one-vote system which was designed to keep the Islamic movement away from exercising any influence on the man in the street."

"At the time the Muslim Brotherhood members felt they were targeted, and also we felt that it is pointless to participate in a policy which we consider directed against national interests; in addition we felt that partici-

pation in a Parliament under government hegemony would not be of benefit to the nation," continued Thneibat.

He said "At present we do not believe that anything has changed to motivate us to change our position because the one person, one vote electoral system is still in force and in view of a municipalities draft law which aims at insulating the Islamic movement from the man in the street."

Thneibat said the present stage requires moves to reassert confidence in the government, adding that civic society institutions and Parliament lost much credibility under the government's hegemony.

"The Muslim Brotherhood is not above the law and does not demand that privilege, but it is demanding a constructive dialogue and a sharing of responsibility with the government," said Thneibat adding that "dialogue is the first step towards constructive work as no national achievement can be attained without being paved way for by a dialogue and understanding by the two sides about the national questions."

"We demand that the government open a dialogue with us with an open mind so that we can reach common denominators instead of keeping each side in its own trench, as this is not in the interest of the nation," he stressed.

As to early elections, he said "early elections would be futile unless the government has conducted real comprehensive revisions of the various political issues, especially the Election Law and the Press and Publications Law and should convince the Islamic movement that it is not targeted."

Second honour crime of 1999 sees man kill daughter

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Police have arrested a 39-year-old man, who on Wednesday morning shot and killed his divorced daughter in the name of family honour in Zarqa, according to official sources.

Maha Walid, 17, received three bullets to her head by her father, who turned himself in shortly after the murder was committed claiming that he killed his daughter to cleanse his honour, one source said.

Another source told the Jordan Times that the victim, who was married at the age of 15, and got divorced seven months ago, was caught by police on Feb. 5 in an

"immoral situation" with three other men, the source said.

The victim was referred to the administrative governor who ordered her detention at a correctional facility, the source said.

On Wednesday, the source disclosed, her aunt, accompanied by her father, put up bail for the girl, and took her to her house in the Wadi Al Hajar area.

"When the three arrived at the house, the father drew his gun and shot his daughter, then turned himself in to police," the source said, adding that "preliminary investigations indicated that the aunt was not aware of her brother's intentions."

According to police surgeon Hani Jahshan, the victim received one bullet to the right side of her head, another to the left, and one to her forehead.

Another source told the Jordan Times that the victim was raised at her aunt's house because her father had divorced her mother.

Police contacted by the Jordan Times Wednesday evening confirmed the incident but declined to comment.

Maha became the second woman reportedly killed in the Kingdom this year for reasons of honour.

Last year officials said that over 20 women were killed in honour related crimes.

Irbid deputy urges intervention for Ocalan

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Ahmad Innab, a deputy from Irbid, on Wednesday urged the Lower House of Parliament to intervene with the Turkish parliament to ensure a "just and fair" trial for Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK), who was arrested in Kenya on Monday.

Ocalan, who Turkey accuses of responsibility for the killing of more than 39,000 people during the 14-year-old war against the Turkish army, was handed over to Turkish agents in Nairobi and later deported to Ankara, fueling the anger of thousands of Kurds in Europe.

The Turkish government pledged a fair trial for the 50-year-old Kurd separatist leader, whose capture ended a six-month-old saga that started with his expulsion from Syria following Turkish threats against Damascus.

"We call upon Turkish authorities to open a dialogue

with this leader," Innab, a physician trained in Turkey, told his fellow deputies during yesterday's ordinary session.

"If he is executed, a new war with the Kurds will break, and that should be averted," the lawmaker said. "We call on Turkey to ensure a fair trial for Ocalan, who was unjustly treated."

"We call on the (Jordanian) government to announce its stand on this case... and our Parliament should contact the Turkish parliament for a fair trial for Ocalan," the deputy added.

Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh, who was present at the Parliament, declined to respond to Innab's demand, and it was unclear if the Parliament will take any action in this regard.

Millions of Kurds are living in Arab states, mostly in Iraq and Syria. A few hundred Kurds arrived in the Kingdom earlier this century and have taken Jordanian citizenship.

Briefs

Japan contribution

AMMAN (Petra) — The Japanese International Cooperation Agency has contributed JD4.5 million for the establishment of an institute for metal industries on a 10-dunum plot in Sahab. The project, the first of its kind in the Middle East, is slated to boost Jordan's exports of such products and create jobs. It includes holding a training course in Japan for 25 Jordanian trainers and administrators working in the sector.

Khreisha briefs German MP

AMMAN (Petra) — Agriculture Minister Mijhem Khreisha met with visiting German parliamentarian Josef Holburt, and briefed him on the Kingdom's agricultural situation and plans to exploit available resources. The minister told Holburt that the most difficult obstacles facing the sector are limited agricultural land, the scarcity of water, high costs of irrigation and the current drought.

Car safety features tax may be scrapped

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Customs Department on Wednesday said it was looking into possible ways to reverse a recent decision forcing car owners to pay for passenger safety features and environment-friendly catalysers after enjoying a three-year exemption.

The month-old decision, based on a 1999 tax law which did not spell out such custom exemptions decreed by the Cabinet three years ago, raised a storm of protests from car dealers and citizens. "The Customs Department is expected, by the end of this week, to add an article to the current law to include tax exemptions for safety facilities in vehicles," said Nathmi Abdullah, head of the department.

"These features are not a luxury as some officials are saying in the hopes of generating more revenue for the state," said one car dealer. "These are basic standard features in Europe and the United States to protect passengers and minimise the impact of injuries in case of accidents."

Many dealers said the issue was highlighted recently after they tried to clear new batches of cars which arrived in the Kingdom after the new law took effect in January. Many were shocked when the Customs Department asked them to pay for previously-exempted articles such as head restraints, anti-lock breaking system (ABS), passenger cells and environment-friendly catalysers.

Dealers said such unjustified extra payments were putting additional strains on

the already depressed car trade business.

The Car Dealers Union termed the decision "surprising and unjustified," and called on the government to reconsider the move.

"The Customs Department did not consult with us before taking the decision and did not inform us about the amendment," said Union chief Salameh Jundi. "We find this very strange," he added.

Several dealers warned against the negative consequences the decision will have on people's safety on the roads and on the environment.

"People will think twice before buying cars with safety and environment-friendly equipment if such facilities will cost them thousands of extra dinars," said Ziad Bustani, general manager of Nis-

san Company.

Bustani said the Customs Department was charging around JD900 per pair of airbags. "Some cars have between six to eight airbags."

"The government should encourage people to install safety facilities in their cars, not obstruct them for the sake of some thousand dinars," added Bustani.

Jordan has among the highest rates of traffic accidents in the region, increasing by 10 per cent every year, according to Traffic Department.

Statistics released by the department two years ago showed that around 500 people were killed or seriously injured in road accidents.

The exemption was decreed by the government in 1996 upon recommendations by the late Monarch, His Majesty King Hussein, who campaigned hard for people's

safety and for a clean environment.

One businessman said he had been unable to take out his car from the Customs Department for the past two weeks on grounds the latter needed some time to clear the misunderstanding.

"After I paid the required fees to the Customs Department I was surprised by a customs official who refused to hand me the car until I paid for the safety and environment-friendly features," he said. "He told me: 'either you wait until we solve the matter or you pay the extras and we will reimburse you as soon as the issue is over,'" he lamented. "Naturally, I opted for keeping the car with them because I know I would have to wait for months, if not years, to reclaim the money after they make up their mind."

Milosevic rebuffs U.S., rejects foreign troops in Kosovo

RAMBOUILLET, France (AP) — Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic dealt a blow Wednesday to prospects for a peace deal on Kosovo, rejecting the Americans' take-it-or-leave-it proposal that foreign troops enforce any accord.

A top Western diplomat at the talks, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday that mediators were "not surprised" by Milosevic's defiance.

"We still have a few more days to go at the conference," he said, referring to the Saturday noon deadline set by the United States and five European countries for an agreement to be reached between Serb and rival Kosovo Albanians.

Milosevic's latest rebuff increases chances of NATO strikes against Serbia.

U.S. envoy Christopher Hill, who flew in from France to meet with him in Belgrade Tuesday night, and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright both warned Milosevic that he will suffer air strikes if he doesn't accept an agreement by the deadline.

But the Yugoslav leader showed no signs of budging.

In a statement issued early Wednesday by the official Tanjug news agency, Milosevic said: "Our negative stand on the presence of foreign troops is not only the attitude of the leadership, but also of all citizens of our country." International mediators, led by the United States, brought Serbs and secessionist Albanians to the negotiating table to end a conflict that has cost an estimated 2,000 lives and left hundreds of thousands homeless in the province, in southern Serbia, the dominant of two Yugoslav republics.

The deployment of an international force is the key element of the deal proposed by the United States and backed by other powers at the conference in a 14th-century chateau outside Paris.

As many as 30,000 NATO troops, including some 4,000 American soldiers, would be sent to Kosovo immediately to police the agreement.

Albright telephoned Milosevic from Washington Tuesday and told him that rival Kosovo Albanians appear ready to sign the agreement and she expects him to do the same, according to spokesman James P. Rubin.

But Milosevic showed no more willingness to do so than the Serbian officials at the talks, which opened on Feb. 6. In his statement, Milosevic reiterated the Serb stand that there can be no independence for Kosovo and that all ethnic communities in the province should have the same rights, although ethnic Albanians make up 90 per cent of Kosovo's population.

"Our delegation in Rambouillet is negotiating in good faith," declared Milosevic.

His statement, along with other defiant signals sent by his government, seemed to offer little hope the Serb delegation would back down and sign the peace deal despite the growing danger of NATO military action.

Tanjug quoted Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister Zivadin Jovanovic as warning that NATO attacks on Yugoslavia would mean the end of any negotiations on the province.

Serbian state television, which reflects Milosevic's views, aired statements from government officials and ordi-

nary Serbs saying the government should not bend to international pressure.

The Serbs had been counting on Russia to back up their rejection of foreign troops. But a NATO source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Russians have told the 16-nation military alliance they are willing to go along with a NATO deployment as part of a three-year interim peace deal.

The source also said Russians may eventually participate in a peacekeeping operation, as they do in the NATO-led force in Bosnia. The Russia-NATO permanent joint council is meeting Wednesday in Brussels, Belgium, to discuss the issue.

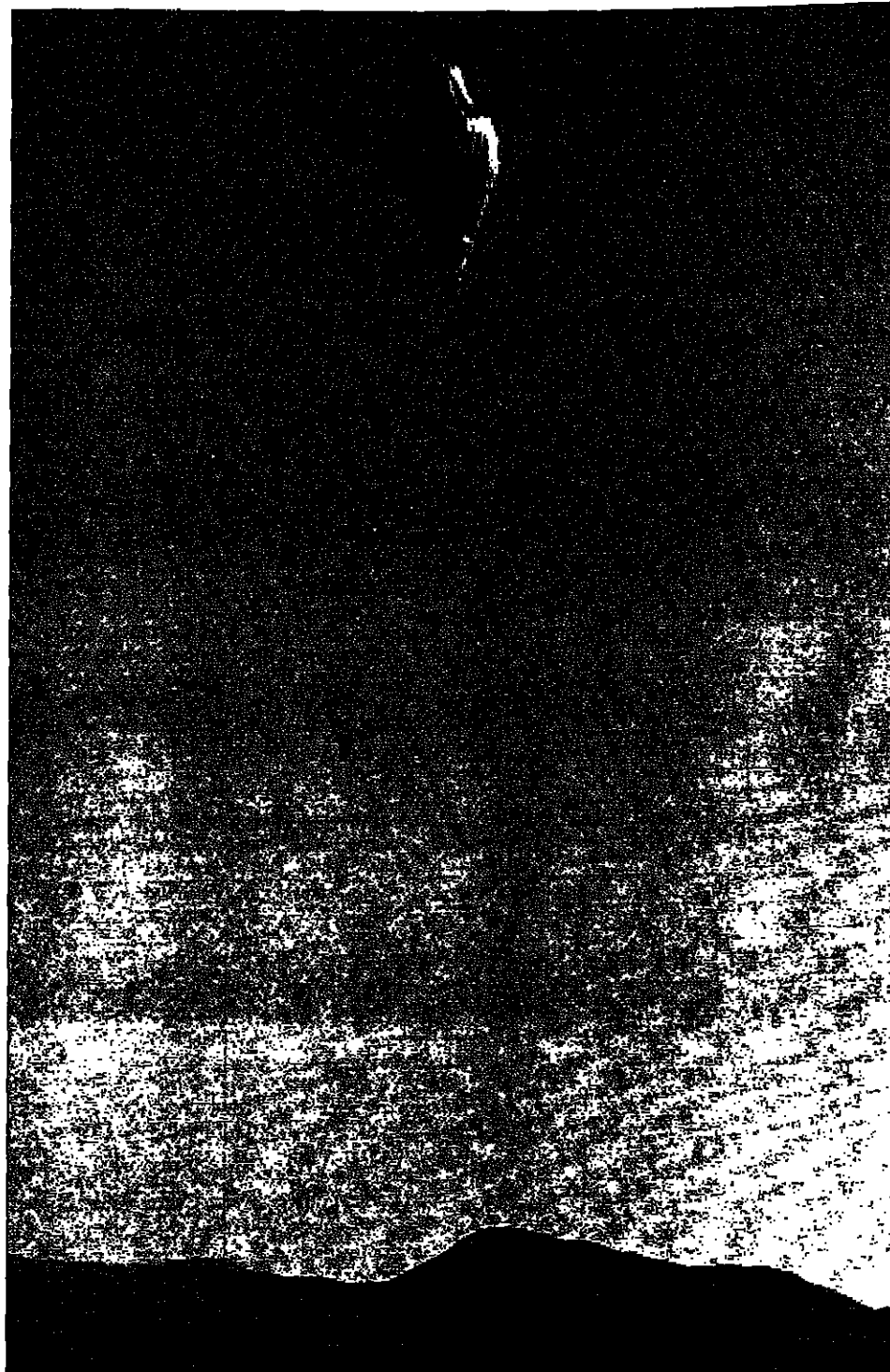
But a senior Russian defence ministry official said Wednesday that NATO's insistence on sending troops was the "most crude and simplistic way" of solving the conflict.

"There are no diplomatic, legal, political or especially economic levers in the alliance's arsenal, just naked military force," said Col. Gen. Leonid Ivashov, head of the ministry's department for international relations, and one of Russia's most outspoken critics of NATO.

Russian officials oppose NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia in the event the peace talks fail.

NATO military planning for deployment is virtually complete.

Advance troops could be in place in Kosovo in a matter of hours with 6,000 to 8,000 more troops quickly following, officials said. The first forces to arrive will probably be 2,200 U.S. Marines currently in the Mediterranean.



The Cable and Wireless round-the-world balloon leaves the launch site in Almeria, Spain. British pilots Colin Prescott and Andy Elson will attempt to fly around the world in under 21 days (Reuters photo)

Cable and Wireless balloon lifts off on round-the-world bid

ALMERIA, Spain (R) — Two Britons lifted off from a golf course in southern Spain Wednesday in the latest bid to fly non-stop around the world in a hot-air balloon.

The balloon team, sponsored by British communications group Cable and Wireless Plc, was headed southwest towards the Canary Islands to catch a subtropical jet stream that would then carry them over Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Egypt on the first leg of a journey that could last up to three weeks.

"It was a perfect launch into beautiful blue skies and they're heading out to sea," a C&W spokeswoman said.

Elson and Prescott face extra difficulties because they have to manoeuvre to avoid China's air space. China has put a ban on British balloons crossing its territory since December, when Branson and Fosset accidentally drifted into a forbidden area.

As a result, Cable and Wireless's shiny, silver-coloured craft had to be modified to carry an extra two tonnes of kerosene fuel to allow it to steer clear of China.

Flying at an average speed of 130-km per hour, the balloon was to pass over North

Africa, India and Hong Kong before crossing the Pacific and entering the United States.

The team was to then pass over the Atlantic in an effort to touch down somewhere in the Mediterranean region. Eighty solar panels provide power for the balloon's batteries.

Weather was expected to be a key factor for the Cable and Wireless attempt, which may also face the hazards of the stormy Pacific climate which sank Branson and Fosset.

Elson and Prescott's round-the-world attempt is one of at least six now being prepared. Other teams also hope to take advantage of the November-to-February season when high-level jet stream winds are at their best.

In Geneva, a Swiss-British balloonist pair said wind conditions prevented them from taking off until at least Saturday in their rival round-the-world bid.

Swiss psychiatrist Bertrand Picard and British co-pilot Brian Jones received permission earlier this month from China to overfly part of its territory, but only over designated areas.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Romanian police stop miners' march, leader arrested

STOENESTI, Romania (AP) — Thousands of police troops clashed with angry coal miners Wednesday, halting their march to the capital to protest a hefty prison sentence handed to their leader. Dozens were injured and 200 miners were arrested. National radio reported later that miners' leader Miron Cozma was arrested in the city of Slatina, some 135 kilometres west of Bucharest. The report could not be independently confirmed. Cozma was sentenced in absentia Monday to 18 years in prison for leading a deadly 1991 march on Bucharest which prompted the miners' protest. Cozma said the sentence, increased from 18 months, was politically orchestrated. In pre-dawn clashes, some 2,000 riot police beat miners with clubs and threw tear gas grenades, leaving dozens injured. About 2,000 miners attacked officers with chains, axes and sticks, according to an interior ministry spokesman. Police arrested 200 miners who were trying to reach the capital in 40 buses, national radio reported. Other miners fled and police troops were combing the area. Miners can expect up to 15 years in prison for attacking police officers. About 35 police troops were injured in the clashes. Most sustained injuries to the head and broken limbs, said Maj. Paul Ulieru. Four officers were in serious condition.

Pro-Suharto protesters rally at Indonesian attorney general's office

JAKARTA (AP) — About 500 people rallied outside the attorney general's office Wednesday in a protest against a corruption investigation of former President Suharto. The protesters said Suharto, who quit last May amid riots and protests against his authoritarian rule, was innocent and had been framed by his opponents. Suharto, 77, has denied any wrongdoing. State prosecutors are investigating allegations that Suharto enriched his family and associates at state expense during 32 years in power. They have lost some of their wealth and influence because of Indonesia's economic crisis and the new government's efforts to curb graft. Student protesters who helped oust Suharto staged noisy demonstrations last year to demand an immediate trial of the ex-army general. They said his successor and onetime protégé, President B.J. Habibie, was too beholden to Suharto to conduct a serious probe. The pro-Suharto protesters, many of them from poor neighbourhood in Jakarta, waved banners and chanted slogans while four truckloads of anti-riot officers looked on. The rally was peaceful. Some of the demonstrators said organisers rounded them up with buses and told them they would be paid 15,000 rupiah (\$1.80) to participate. Organiser Abu Aufan, a neighbourhood youth leader, said the government should be clear about whether it plans to prosecute Suharto or not. "We demand that the attorney general's office make an announcement about the Suharto case on whether he should be punished or not," said Aufan, who organised a similar protest at the office earlier this month. The investigation of Suharto started five months ago, but no charges have been filed. Habibie has said he wants the investigation to be finished before parliamentary elections on June 7.

New leaders in two Indian states

NEW DELHI (AP) — A former schoolteacher took over Wednesday as the top official of an eastern Indian state, replacing a senior politician who quit after a string of anti-Christian attacks, domestic news agencies reported. Giridhar Gomango, 56, chosen by India's main opposition leader Sonia Gandhi, took the oath of office at the head of the Congress party government in the coastal state of Orissa. Press Trust of India reported. Gomango was chosen after senior Congress Party leader J.B. Patnaik resigned owing moral responsibility for attacks on Christians in the state, including the killing of an Australian missionary and his two sons who were burned alive by a mob. Patnaik's resignation reportedly came under pressure from Gandhi. Across the Deccan plateau in the western state of Maharashtra, Chief Minister Narayan Rane Wednesday won the vote of confidence for his Hindu right-wing government, a coalition of his Shiv Sena Party and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party. Rane became chief minister after his predecessor Mahabir Joshi was sacked by Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray last month in an apparent attempt to prop up the state government's sagging image ahead of provincial elections next year.

International Law Enforcement Academy set to open in Thailand

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COLUMBIA, Tennessee (AP) — A woman who allegedly wanted to teach her new husband a lesson about the dangers of smoking in bed has been charged with burning down the house. Linda Stewart, 39, put a lit cigarette on the couple's bed Sunday and left the house, police said. "She admitted to intentionally starting the fire," detective Mickey Jones said. "According to her, he had fallen asleep the night before and left a cigarette burning, and it burned a small area on the bed. So she said she was going to show him what could happen if he didn't catch it." Her husband, Tim, was not home when the fire started about 10:30 a.m. When he returned, the house was gutted. Stewart was arrested on arson charges. The Stewarts were married two months ago.

Polish parliament to vote on joining NATO

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland's parliament Wednesday plans to ratify documents for joining NATO, one of the last formal steps for the former Warsaw pact country to enter the Western military alliance.

Both the Sejm and senate chambers scheduled votes on the so-called accession documents, which will be signed by President Aleksander Kwasniewski later this month and submitted to U.S. officials at a joint ceremony with two other NATO newcomers — Czech Republic and Hungary — on March 12.

Kwasniewski said Tuesday he expected both chambers to easily ratify the documents, with only a handful of opposing votes from Polish nationalists. He said he would sign the documents on Feb. 26 or 27 in a ceremony held simulta-

neously with similar ceremonies in Prague and Hungary.

A former Communist, Kwasniewski called the decision by the former Soviet bloc countries to join NATO "one of the most important in the 20th century" because it signalled a new era of global relations by ending forever the post-World War II divisions contained in the Yalta agreement that split Europe.

He also made clear that Poland would support further NATO expansion and assist candidates such as Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia if they seek membership in the Western alliance.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Gusev warned earlier this month of a "red line" stopping NATO

expansion at the borders of the former Soviet Union.

But NATO defence ministers and others have rejected Gusev's assertion, saying any independent country can choose to join NATO.

Kwasniewski said NATO should continue building a strong, cooperative relationship with Russia to overcome Moscow's fears of territorial and political domination by the West.

He declared Poland politically prepared to join NATO but acknowledged making its forces fully inter-operational — the NATO term that means interchangeable — with NATO forces would take more time. The basic requirements such as air security and protecting sensitive information would be met, he said.

Pollution victims reach out-of-court settlement with companies

TOKYO (AP) — Nine Japanese companies Wednesday accepted an out-of-court settlement requiring them to pay 2.42 billion yen (\$20.5 million) in damages to about 380 victims of air pollution and their families, officials said.

The companies also issued an apology to the victims, ending a more than decade-long court battle stemming from environmental contamination during Japan's period of rapid industrialisation in the 1960s and 1970s.

"We are very sorry that many people, including the plaintiffs ... are still suffering even today," said Koshi Mizukoshi, vice president of Kobe Steel Co., as he and eight other company executives bowed deeply to the victims.

The nine defendants in the suit were Kobe Steel, Kansai Electric Power Co., Sumitomo Metal Industries Ltd., Asahi Glass Co., Kubota Corp.,

Kansai Coke and Chemical Co., Furukawa Co., Godo Steel Ltd. and Nakayama Steel Products Co.

Under the deal, which was proposed by the Kobe district court, the nine companies must make the payment to plaintiffs in the suit by month's end.

It also calls for 920 million yen of the settlement money to be earmarked for environmental projects in Amagasaki, located about 400 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

The plaintiffs had sought a total of 9.2 billion yen (\$78 million) from the companies, as well as the central government and Hanshin Expressway Public Corp.

The suit was filed in 1988 by 472 patients with asthma and other respiratory ailments and 11 bereaved families. They accused the defendants in the case of failing to take appropriate measures for stopping the emission of industrial pollutants in the Amagasaki area.

More than 120 patients have died since, while some 120 others have withdrawn from the suit.

Presiding Judge Shogo Takenaka had urged the companies not to prolong the suit any further.

"A long time has passed since the case was filed, and many of the plaintiffs are aged, while others have died," he said.

Wednesday's settlement came before a final hearing in the case which was scheduled for March. The plaintiffs will continue their suit against the state and public highway authority, however.

The ruling for that portion was expected later this year. "This is just the beginning," Mitsuko Matsui, a 67-year-old plaintiff with chronic bronchitis, was quoted as saying in the major daily Yomiuri. "The settlement money must be used effectively so that we can have a clean town."

Catholic bishops meet with Castro

HAVANA (AP) — Cuban President Fidel Castro met with Roman Catholic bishops from across the Americas as the prelates wound up two days of talks on the church's role in the Western hemisphere.

Dressed in a dark suit, Castro Tuesday evening began his own talks with the 31 members of the Latin American Episcopal Conference, meeting for the first time in Cuba.

Earlier Tuesday, the bishops called for an end to the U.S. embargo against Cuba and said they hoped for improved relations between the two countries.

"It has always been the position of the bishops of the United States ... to seek the lessening and even the ending of the embargo," said Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark, New Jersey.

U.S. President Bill Clinton announced in January modest measures designed to improve contact between the American and Cuban peo-

ples. "We hope they are just the beginning of more substantial changes," the archbishop said.

Clinton's measures would let more Americans send money to Cubans, offer direct mail service between the two countries and expand direct charter flights, but the embargo would remain intact.

McCarrick was among five cardinals, 25 bishops and one priest who gathered for the conference.

For the first time, the group included 15 bishops from the United States and Canada. Church sources said the meeting could be the first move towards permanently expanding the Latin American conference to include bishops from north America.

The bishops said they hoped that by meeting here they would provide a model for U.S.-Cuba relations.

"We hope that this will be another good step towards the openness that the Holy Father spoke of" when Pope John

Paul II visited Cuba last year, McCarrick said.

During meetings behind closed doors at a luxury hotel, the prelates have studied John Pope's call for intensive evangelisation in the Western hemisphere and the church's role in the region in the next millennium.

Also on the agenda was a look at the Cuban church one year after the pontiff's historic January 1998 trip.

The president of the bishop's conference, Archbishop Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, said the group planned to provide the Cuban church with funds to build more sanctuaries.

It also plans to send more priests and missionaries to help in evangelisation efforts once it gets approval from the Cuban government.

Church gains since the papal visit have been modest. But church leaders consider them important in a country that was once officially atheist, expelled foreign priests and closed church schools.

STOENESTI, Romania (AP) — Thousands of police troops clashed with angry coal miners Wednesday, halting their march to the capital to protest a hefty prison sentence handed to their leader. Dozens were injured and 200 miners were arrested. National radio reported later that miners' leader Miron Cozma was arrested in the city of Slatina, some 135 kilometres west of Bucharest. The report could not be independently confirmed. Cozma was sentenced in absentia Monday to 18 years in prison for leading a deadly 1991 march on Bucharest which prompted the miners' protest. Cozma said the sentence, increased from 18 months, was politically orchestrated. In pre-dawn clashes, some 2,000 riot police beat miners with clubs and threw tear gas grenades, leaving dozens injured. About 2,000 miners attacked officers with chains, axes and sticks, according to an interior ministry spokesman. Police arrested 200 miners who were trying to reach the capital in 40 buses, national radio reported. Other miners fled and police troops were combing the area. Miners can expect up to 15 years in prison for attacking police officers. About 35 police troops were injured in the clashes. Most sustained injuries to the head and broken limbs, said Maj. Paul Ulieru. Four officers were in serious condition.

Pro-Suharto protesters rally at Indonesian attorney general's office

JAKARTA (AP) — About 500 people rallied outside the attorney general's office Wednesday in a protest against a corruption investigation of former President Suharto. The protesters said Suharto, who quit last May amid riots and protests against his authoritarian rule, was innocent and had been framed by his opponents. Suharto, 77, has denied any wrongdoing. State prosecutors are investigating allegations that Suharto enriched his family and associates at state expense during 32 years in power. They have lost some of their wealth and influence because of Indonesia's economic crisis and the new government's efforts to curb graft. Student protesters who helped oust Suharto staged noisy demonstrations last year to demand an immediate trial of the ex-army general. They said his successor and onetime protégé, President B.J. Habibie, was too beholden to Suharto to conduct a serious probe. The pro-Suharto protesters, many of them from poor neighbourhood in Jakarta, waved banners and chanted slogans while four truckloads of anti-riot officers looked on. The rally was peaceful. Some of the demonstrators said organisers rounded them up with buses and told them they would be paid 15,000 rupiah (\$1.80) to participate. Organiser Abu Aufan, a neighbourhood youth leader, said the government should be clear about whether it plans to prosecute Suharto or not. "We demand that the attorney general's office make an announcement about the Suharto case on whether he should be punished or not," said Aufan, who organised a similar protest at the office earlier this month. The investigation of Suharto started five months ago, but no charges have been filed. Habibie has said he wants the investigation to be finished before parliamentary elections on June 7.

New leaders in two Indian states

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Vice President of the United States Al Gore shakes hands with South African President Nelson Mandela (centre) and South African Vice President Thabo Mbeki at the Tuynhuis in Cape Town. Gore is on a three-day working visit to South Africa (Reuters photo)

U.S. Vice President Gore leads high-powered visit to S. Africa

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Vice President Al Gore led a high-powered U.S. delegation to South Africa Wednesday to boost trade and development, but the stalled U.S.-Africa trade bill put a damper on the visit.

The U.S. Senate didn't approve the bill last year mostly because American textile manufacturers don't want tariffs lowered on African textile exports to the United States, said U.S. embassy spokesman Bruce Wharton.

"It's a disappointment," Wharton said, acknowledging that the floundering of the trade bill had taken wind out of the sails of Gore's

trip. U.S. President Bill Clinton lavished praise on the bill during his trip to Africa 11 months ago. Last week, U.S. Trade representative for Africa Rosa Whitaker tried to rekindle the flame. She told the U.S. Congress it had a "moral imperative" to pass the bill, which would lower tariffs and encourage investment in 48 sub-Saharan nations.

Unlike the hoopla that accompanied Clinton's visit, Gore's was more low-key. The Cape Times newspaper carried only a brief story on the visit on an inside page.

After arriving in Cape Town Wednesday morning

from Washington, Gore was to meet with President Nelson Mandela and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. Mandela's likely successor after South Africa holds elections around mid-year.

During the two-day visit, Gore and Mbeki will preside over a meeting of the U.S.-South Africa Binational Commission — a forum to manage cooperation and expansion of relations between the two countries.

An agreement that would create a mechanism for managing trade disputes was expected to be signed at the end of the visit.

Accompanying Gore are

Attorney General Janet Reno, Commerce Secretary William Daley, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, Whitaker and other top officials.

They will meet their South African counterparts to discuss trade, conservation, health and other issues.

The United States is one of South Africa's biggest trading partners and direct foreign investors. It has invested more than \$10 billion since 1994, when apartheid ended with the holding of the nation's first all-race elections.

Military courts in Pakistan declared illegal

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The supreme court declared the newly established military courts illegal Wednesday, sparing 14 people from a death sentence handed down by these courts.

"The establishment of military courts for the trial of civilians... are declared unconstitutional, without lawful authority and of no legal effect," said the judgment of the seven-member supreme court bench.

The government earlier said these courts were not meant to replace the civilian judicial system, but rather to supplement it.

Attorney General Chaudhry Farooq said the government will need time to study the supreme court ruling.

Pakistan's constitution does not allow a supreme court ruling to be appealed. However, Farooq said the government can ask the supreme court judges to review their judgment.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will meet his cabinet, colleagues and party mem-

bers before making a decision of whether to apply for a review, Farooq told the Associated Press.

The government established the courts in November in the violence-wracked Sindh province to try to reduce a spiralling crime rate by implementing quick justice.

Cases before the military courts generally take less than two weeks to complete, compared to the months and sometimes years in the civilian judicial system.

Human rights groups, lawyers and opposition parties have assailed the army-run courts as unconstitutional.

The supreme court order demanded that all cases currently before the military courts be transferred to Pakistan's special anti-terrorist courts.

The Pakistan army, however, said the courts will continue to operate until it receives an order from either the supreme court or the government to shut down.

"The military courts are still in progress... we are awaiting orders from the government or the supreme court," said Col. Ashfaq Hussain, an army spokesman.

The Muttahida Qami Movement, a small ethnic party that dominates in southern Sindh province, accused the government of using these courts to target its party workers.

It was the MQM, which represents Urdu-speaking Muslims to Pakistan, who challenged the legality of the courts.

"It is good news," Ehsanullah Khan, an MQM legislator in the Sindh provincial parliament, said of the judgment.

Another MQM member said the judgment reflected an independent judiciary.

"This decision shows that the superior judiciary is not under pressure from anyone," said Babar Qauri, an MQM spokesman. "The decision has proven that the people of Pakistan can approach the superior judi-

ciary to seek justice."

Last month the government announced it would establish similar military courts throughout the country.

Three people already have been executed in Sindh province after being convicted by the army-run courts. In January the supreme court ordered all death sentences suspended until it ruled on the legality of the courts.

The government argued before the supreme court that the courts discouraged crime and that the crime rate had dropped substantially since they began operating in Karachi, the Sindh provincial capital.

However in the military courts the lawyer for the defendant is appointed by the court and the lawyer is not allowed to call witnesses, although the prosecution lawyer may. The lawyer for the defendant also is required to put his defence in writing, not give it verbally.

Congo rebels, pushed towards key southern diamond centre

KIGALI, Rwanda (AP) — Reinforced by fresh troops from nearby Rwanda, Congolese rebels broke a months-old lull in fighting and pressed towards a key southern diamond centre, the rebels and Rwandan sources said Wednesday.

Rebel leader Ernest Wamba dia Wamba said the fresh offensive followed the failure of African mediators to broker a cease-fire and persuade Congolese President Laurent Kabila to negotiate peace directly with the insurgents.

Kabila is insisting on Rwandan and Ugandan withdrawal from Congo. "If we are moving faster, it means we just have to do so because of the circumstances," Wamba told the Associated Press.

"We will just have to fight through and overthrow Kabila, set up a new government and a forum for a legal framework for the transition to democracy," he said.

Rwandan sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said chartered Russian aircraft recently airlifted thousands of Rwandan troops to south-

eastern Congo, where they were assisting the rebels in a three-front offensive around Mbuji-Mayi, 930 kilometres east of the capital, Kinshasa.

If successful, the capture of the Mbuji-Mayi and its mines — the world's biggest source of industrial diamonds — will deprive the government of its major source of revenue and help rebels bankroll an end to the 6-month-old war.

The rebels accuse Kabila of mismanagement, corruption and ethnic warmongering. They rely heavily on Rwandan and Ugandan troops, who helped Kabila in power after he ousted longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in May 1997 but then turned against his neighbours.

Rwanda and Uganda accuse Kabila of enlisting thousands of Hutu fighters fleeing the 1994 genocide of at least 500,000 people in Rwanda, and persecuting members of the ethnic Tutsi minority in Congo.

The Rwandan-backed units were moving in a wide pincer movement, from Kabalo towards Kabila's hometown of

Manono, 390 kilometres east of Mbuji-Mayi, and from Lubao towards Kabinda, the last government stronghold before the diamond city.

The biggest obstacle lies in Kamina, 330 kilometres south of Mbuji-Mayi, where Kabila's allies from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia — reinforced with former Rwandan Hutu soldiers and militiamen — have put up a strong defence, sources said.

So far, stepped-up aerial bombardments by Zimbabwean jet-fighters have done little to stop rebel advances.

Tuesday, Rwandan units infiltrating the government-held territory ambushed an army train carrying troops and equipment to Kamina, sources said.

Kamina is on the railroad to Lubumbashi, capital of the mineral-rich Katanga province.

Zimbabwe's ministry of defence said Tuesday the rebels were approaching the northern Congolese town of Gbadolite, Mobutu's former home and the base for Chadian troops fighting in support of the government.

Gusmao rejects fears of civil war

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Jailed East Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmao Wednesday rejected as irresponsible calls for the disputed territory to delay independence and said the province must be allowed to decide its future within months.

Nobel laureate Bishop Carlos Belo, the Catholic primate for East Timor, Tuesday warned the former Portuguese colony was not ready for independence and would need a transition period of up to 15 years.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has warned that a sudden move to independence in East Timor could lead to civil war.

Gusmao, who is under house arrest in Indonesia's capital Jakarta, hit out at such criticism and denied East Timor would be at risk if independence was rushed.

"I don't think so because we are fighting 23 years and we know well our political control over the population and the problem the threat of war it is," Gusmao told Radio Australia's Asia Pacific Programme.

"I can say it is just bluff from some people, irresponsible people that claim that it would be a civil war."

Gusmao appealed to Australia to put pressure on the Indonesian government to disarm pro-integration paramilitary gangs terrorising East Timorese who support independence.

"At this time I think the important (role) Australia can play is to firstly ask the Indonesian government to dissolve the civilians who have been armed to disarm, to intimidate the population," he said.

He said disarming East Timor was essential for peace, and he appealed for a united nations peacekeeping force to be established on the island.

Gusmao said a referendum or some other means of determining the will of the East Timorese had to be held before June's Indonesian elections so that the East Timorese could opt out of the election.

He said he hoped the announcement by the leader of the opposition Democratic Front, Megawati Sukarnoputri, that East Timor should remain part of Indonesia was just election posturing.

"I cannot imagine that the leader of a well-known democratic party that was fighting in the new order (Suharto) era cannot respect the fundamental right of all the peoples of the world, cannot respect the principles of democracy," he said.

Hun Sen pressures international community for Khmer Rouge trial

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Hun Sen has again called for an international trial of the Khmer Rouge and its foreign backers, a move that would probably ensure that the genocidal group's leaders are never punished.

In an interview with an Australian newspaper that was reprinted in a Cambodian paper Wednesday, Hun Sen voiced support for international efforts to bring the Khmer Rouge to justice, shrugging off criticism of his refusal to arrest top leaders after their recent defection.

"My position is: if they decide to stage such a trial, they can go ahead," Hun Sen said. "I have given no guarantees that anyone is exempt from trial."

He repeated that the United States, China, Thailand and others should also be indicted for helping the guerrillas rise to power before 1975 and survive after they were overthrown in 1979 by an invading Vietnamese army.

"We cannot hold a trial to try one or two cases without connecting these to earlier cases. I said this to the U.N. committee of experts when they came to meet me," Hun Sen was quoted as telling the Green Left weekly in a Jan. 27

interview reprinted in the newspaper Rasmei Kampuchea.

Answering a 1997 request from the Cambodian government, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan sent three legal experts to Cambodia in November to assess the options for bringing senior Khmer Rouge leaders to justice for crimes against humanity.

The Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975, then emptied the cities and forced the entire population into crude farming collectives in an attempt to create a Communist utopia. As many as two million people — about 1 in 4 — died

from starvation, overwork, disease or execution.

The U.N. recommendations are to be released to the Cambodian government this month.

With Cambodia's corrupt court system woefully inadequate for the task, the U.N. team is expected to recommend the formation of an international tribunal that would probably require Security Council endorsement.

Hun Sen's desire to widen the tribunal's net has been viewed by critics as a ploy to sink prospects of a trial by provoking a veto from Security Council members China or the United States.

French sailor saved in heroic ocean rescue

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Her life in peril and her boat destroyed by mountainous waves, a French sailor was rescued unharmed in the South Pacific by a competitor in the solo around-the-world race.

Isabelle Autissier was picked up at 9:37 a.m. Est (1437 GMT) Tuesday by Italian yachtsman Giovanni Soldini, who braved heavy seas to find her capsized craft about 24 hours after she sent a distress signal.

"The French sailor is now safe and in good condition aboard the Italian yacht Fila," Chilean navy Cmdr. Nilton Duran told the Associated Press by telephone.

Autissier was the overall leader of the 43,200-kilometre around alone race when her 20-metre PRB overturned in fierce weather Monday. The Chilean navy said the 42-year-old Frenchwoman's boat was "completely lost."

Charleston maritime commission director Jeanne

Aichele said she was not sure whether the boat could be recovered.

"The boat suddenly turned more than 90 degrees, and I could no longer be in the cockpit," Autissier said. "Then it suddenly turned over, and I didn't have time to shut the door."

Autissier sent a Mayday and made a brief call to Paris after her boat was capsized by 64 kph winds and waves as high as 12 metres, race director Peter Rachman said from Auckland, New Zealand.

"Very quickly, the mast snapped into pieces," she said.

"When I saw that, I sent the signal because there was nothing else I could do. Then I began to get organised, getting security material together. With no known commercial or private shipping in the isolated ocean south of Australia, organisers said the fleet represented Autissier's best chance for survival.

Autissier was in second

place in the third leg before her boat capsized, trailing Marc Thiercelin by 61 kilometres. The rescue came 3,310 kilometres west of Punta Arenas, Chile's southernmost city.

"I calculated that Marc or Giovanni were closest to me, but nevertheless realised that it could take at least 24 hours for them to arrive," Autissier said.

Soldini was 320 kilometres and at least 10 hours away when he turned south into heavy seas to reach Autissier.

Duran said the weather had improved at the time of the rescue and winds had slowed.

"I am heading for PRB," Soldini told the race operations centre in Charleston, South Carolina, by radio before heading to Autissier. "I'm not letting up until I have found her."

When Soldini found Autissier's yacht, it was upside down and he didn't see the Frenchwoman. Aichele said.

After two or three passes, he threw a hammer at the hull to wake her up, Aichele said.

"She came out of the hatch, got into a life raft and drifted downwind to Giovanni," she said. "They are now having wine and cheese somewhere on Giovanni's boat."

The Chilean navy kept contact with stations in Hawaii, California and New Zealand during the search and rescue efforts.

Duran said Fila will stay in the race and is expected to reach Uruguay in seven to nine days. The race, which includes nine boats, began in Charleston in August and is to end there in the spring.

Thiercelin still leads the race.

Two other competitors were heading towards Autissier, but organisers said the nearest boat was at least three days away.

At a briefing before the fleet left Auckland last week, skippers were told to look after each other.

Prosecutor to reopen Biko case after police denied amnesty

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — A prosecutor said Wednesday that the denial of amnesty for Steve Biko's police assailants could possibly open the door to murder charges against the officers.

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission rejected amnesty for three of the surviving officers who interrogated the black consciousness leader in 1977. Another has since died and the fifth was denied amnesty in December.

Any prosecution would likely rekindle passions about a man who became synonymous with resistance to apartheid. The case sparked an outcry at home and abroad and hastened the end of white minority rule.

Les Roberts, top prosecutor for the eastern Cape province, said in a telephone interview that he would reopen the case, but his remarks also suggested the chances for prosecution were not overwhelming.

"We are going to have to make a study of the whole issue. It's quite a complex one, working out whether we have a case to prosecute or not," he said.

"All I want to say is, the matter is open." The statute of limitations for any count less than murder has expired.

Roberts and other prosecutors had found there was not enough evidence to prosecute the officers on lesser charges. And the statements made by the officers to the panel would most likely not be admissible in court.

"Our options are murder or nothing," Roberts said.

The likelihood of a murder charge rests mainly on whether one or more of the four officers would turn state's evidence and testify against the others, Roberts said.

Roberts didn't rule out other strategies.

"One never knows. In criminal cases, funny things can happen," he said.

The human rights panel Tuesday rejected amnesty for policemen Harold Snyman, Daniel Siebert, Jacobus Benke and Rubin Marx. Snyman died of cancer and Gideon Nieuwoudt's application was consid-

ered, and rejected, separately.

The panel denied them amnesty because they had failed the cardinal test: they admitted no crime. Further, the panel found they had continued their lies of decades about the circumstances of Biko's death.

The five said Biko tried to attack one of his interrogators while in custody, and that he accidentally slammed his head against the wall during a scuffle that ensued.

The panel said they most likely were angered by Biko's defiant posture — including sitting in a chair without permission.

Biko, 30, remained chained naked to a metal gate in a standing position for two days. He was then taken in a police van on a 1,200-kilometre trip to a prison in Pretoria, where he died of brain injuries on Sept. 12, 1977.

"I do believe there has to be a prosecution and it has to happen speedily," said Peter Jones, a friend who was with Biko at the time of the arrest. "I'm looking at a murder trial," Jones told SABC Radio.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975
 جوردن تايمز مؤسسة صحفية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

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Forging ahead

THE NEW three-year economic programme being finalised between the International Monetary Fund and Jordan is conditioned on a set of specific reforms that would place privatisation at the top of the list. There is no question that the IMF fund facility to be provided under the new programme would inject an urgently needed \$150 million annually into the treasury. Such infusions would thus certainly pave the way for the Paris Club to reschedule Jordan's national debt which stand at \$6.8 billion or 91% of the GDP. In return for these monetary transfusions at this critical time when our economic growth is less than our population growth, we are supposed to carry on with the much talked about privatisation campaign over and above other economic and financial measures that would include lower budget deficit, lower inflationary rate and higher economic growth.

IMF Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer has pressed hard on the privatisation front during his visit here Monday. Fischer pointed out that it is important for Jordan to move ahead with its "much delayed privatisation drive," in order to "convince the world of the seriousness of the reform programme." He went on to say that "no privatisation is bad, but promising to privatise and not doing it is worse." The IMF official must have been referring to the fact that we have been pursuing privatisation with considerable hesitation. With the exception of the sell-off of 33% of the Jordan Cement Factories Company to the private sector, Jordan has indeed done very little on the privatisation trail.

This IMF article of faith in privatisation as a panacea to our economic woes, however, is not without its cost. There is no doubt that privatisation per se is a sound economic course to take provided that other necessary measures are adopted and implemented in order to deal with its heavy political and social costs. Pursuing privatisation blindly as the one absolute answer to countries' economic crises has been proven wrong in so many instances. Many international organisations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, ILO and several U.N. human rights bodies have voiced concerns about some aspects of the IMF's reform programmes, especially privatisation in the absence of effective social safety nets.

What disturbs us at the prospect of yet another agreement with IMF is that such an accord is being concluded without even a whisper about the needed safety net, especially at a time when poverty and unemployment are soaring and have, therefore, considerable political and social costs unless taken into consideration. We trust that while there is still time, that the envisaged reforms expected of us could be expanded in order to factor in other dimensions that seem to be ignored. Otherwise, what we could be doing with one hand would be destroyed with the other.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh said that for Jordan, the 20th century ended on Feb. 2, 1999, and the country now enters the next century two years early. However, this does not mean, as the international media is trying to prove, that the Kingdom has entered a new era that will change all policies and directives. Faneh noted, internally, the so-called "future challenges," which are economic growth, democracy and social stability, are in fact the same challenges as in the past, he said adding that Jordan has always been struggling with these challenges, and although full of ups and downs, the results have been reassuring. Despite that, the "new-old" challenges do not have immediate solutions, one government might find the answers, while another one might not. For example, said the writer, the problems with the economic growth in the past three years could be solved by expanding public spending, reducing interest rates, and increasing the money supply. However, such solutions would harm economic stability, because it would increase the deficit, foreign debt and consumption as well as greedily reduce the Central Bank's reserve of hard currencies. Every problem can be solved if taken in isolation from other issues in the community, but such solutions might give rise to other problems, thus, the real challenge is to find comprehensive solutions that consider all aspects, said Faneh.

Al Dustour's Yasser Za'arah commented on the suspension of Al Majd weekly. Za'arah said the article of the Press and Publications Law which was activated to prosecute the paper is the most "terrifying" to all parties working for the publication. The promises that were made ahead of the approval of the law almost convinced people that the article would not be implemented in practice except in exceptional cases, and Al Majd is not an exception, claimed the writer. Za'arah said he was not commenting on the legal side of the issue, but on the regulation which was used by the Press and Publications Department to refer the paper's chief editor to court. The problem is that the court might decide to free Al Majd, and in this case no compensation will be forthcoming, said the writer, who added that the law, which stipulates the suspension of a newspaper before a court ruling, is the essential problem. The absence of Al Majd is a great loss to local journalism and the most difficult thing is the feeling that promises were not kept, Za'arah said.

On weather and politics

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

JUST AS the overall mood in the region these days (for the past half century, one may hasten to add) is not particularly good, this year's weather has not been, on the whole, particularly auspicious. If Middle-Eastern weather and politics have anything in common, it is, essentially, their abnormality.

Weather-wise, we have not had much rain; we have not had much of a winter, in fact. A month ago or so, I said to a friend one morning: "Nice weather." He immediately replied "Yeah, nice weather, but not in January, for God's sake. We want thunder and storms."

Ironically, but correctly, nice weather is not acceptable in January, in a year which has not seen much rain, and much cold. Rain and winter, it turns out, are essential to people's psychological sanity. In winter, you want rain and cold and foul weather, not clear, sunny days. The human psyche is quite weird in this respect.

In winter, people expect rain. To us, lack of rain comes as a sad reminder of what water experts warn us about even in years where there is plenty of rain: ultimate water shortage, perhaps even drought. The absence of rain, is real bad news in the short and long-run. In the short run, our spring will not be as spectacular as in years where there is plenty of rain. The poets in us will be somewhat disappointed. At a humbler level, the absence of grass means white cheese of less quality and quantity — bad news for those among us who have not stored enough from last year. The lambs are going to be leaner but more expensive.

But the absence of rain will embolden the Water Authority to cut our water rations (already scarce) even more drastically than last year.

Last year we, quite often, did not get water for three consecu-

tive weeks. What is going to happen this year, when our dams' capacity is way below the red line? One shudders to even think about it.

Let there be no mistake about it, the weather is not only weird and abnormal but also somewhat ominous. But so is the overall environment.

The peace process (despite peculiar handshakes and talk about some inevitable surprises and breakthroughs) is at a nasty standstill. There is no rain at present, and there seem to be no clouds in the offing. Not only is the momentum of Arab-Israeli peace non-existent, but Arab-Arab relations are not at their best and Israeli-Israeli relations seem to be equally bad. The hawks and the doves on either side of the divide are at it again. No consensus, no mutual understanding, no reconciliation of positions. No rain at this level.

As we approach the end of the Millennium with relations in

cies, etc. We, on the other hand, are still as divided as ever. There is a lot of overt and covert tension, instead of cooperation, coordination, and unification of efforts.

Had we been less at odds with ourselves there would be less violence, less tension, procrastination, waste of time, lukewarmness, border hassle, and so forth. Our psyche would be in a better shape.

But had we been less at odds with ourselves, our water present and future would be less "droughty" and grim. We would all be sharing the water wealth that the few enjoy and the many do not. Our present would be more pleasant and our future more reassuring and secure.

And not only would the Water Authority be less bold in cutting off our water supplies, but our lambs would be fatter and our white cheese whiter and more abundant.

Weird weather, weird region.

Opening up to self-reliance

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

THE PROCESS of financing economic development doesn't seem to be beginning at home these days in the Arab World. Amid a regional slump and falling oil prices, some of the smaller countries of the Middle East are becoming more dependent on foreign aid. This has been particularly true of Jordan, whose friends have rallied around over the past few weeks with yet more financial support. Not that such donors as the U.S., the EU countries, Japan and others have been stingy with Jordanians in the past few years — far from it. However, the amounts of money now being promised by the bid donors are starting to push Jordan towards the top of international league tables of per capita aid recipients, with indications that the country may yet receive even more foreign help than the amounts currently pledged.

Jordan is directly affected by the freezing of the peace process and the withholding of the peace dividend, so maybe the country doesn't have many other options in the short run apart from aid. Looked at from a long-term perspective, though, foreign support should not be so high on our agenda. No amount of outside aid is going to pull Jordan out of its economic trough if Jordanians don't help themselves.

Loans for infrastructure projects or other borrowing from outsiders have to be weighed against our external debt. Jordan's foreign obligations, though not as crushing as in the late 1980s, are still at a critical level and should not be increased carelessly.

As for foreign grants, the lack of discipline sometimes associated with them means that, other things being equal, the slow efforts by the state to reform may not be speeded up by financial gifts from abroad. True, some grant money has been put to good use, but this is not necessarily a general rule. Talk about aid conditionality for Jordan continues to be overwhelmed by political factors.

In other words, the misuse of aid funds, through bungling or worse, is sometimes ignored by donors for overriding strategic reasons. This unfortu-

nately is a game that Jordanians have become skilled at playing. Jordan is in a central political position in the region, and most of the outside powers that count want the country to stay on an even keel. So the grants keep rolling in, and some of them end up getting wasted while also encouraging waste.

As a small guy in a tough neighbourhood, Jordan has its work cut out for it trying to achieve stability internally as well as not falling foul of the more powerful states around. King Hussein managed this, and Jordanians can look back with thanks on how steady things in the country have been over the past few decades. One of the late Monarch's prime characteristics was his courage in making tough decisions. Unfortunately, the days of difficult choices are not over, though the ones to come may be quite new and different from those of the past. In other words, the steps that have to be taken today to put Jordan on the track of prosperous economic stability may depart markedly from those of previous eras. Liberalisation is obviously a key factor here. We have had some over the past few years, but much more is needed. This has to be coupled with maintaining internal stability, but the day may come soon when opening up the economy and society will have to start taking precedence over the country's previous steady-as-she-goes policies.

The skills required to rule Jordan today and into the next few decades

will also differ from those needed back in the 1950s or 60s. Above all what is essential now is to pursue the path of openness that King Hussein mapped out during his last fight against cancer. Though he finally lost that battle, he gained a moral victory in the open manner in which he acted and the amount of information he made available to the media and the general public. For Jordan to remain on this path of openness of information will be a big help. The average Jordanian is too poor and demoralised to afford much more of the state's traditional policies of opacity and mystification. The openness displayed by King Hussein since he first announced his illness last July helped clear the air. For us to continue along this path will be a boon to Jordanians, and could also become part of the fight against corruption.

Which brings us back to the question of how to finance development projects: internal reform has lots to do with how much money the state has for such work. Coming to grips with public sector corruption and dealing with phantom workers in the government would help, but it looks like we have a long way to go before coming to grips with the drain on state resources. Making a start at tackling these questions will have to come soon. Doing so in an atmosphere of openness will help, and a revised or new press law could be a key element in such a process. This is just an example of one of the tough decisions that will have to be made to help get us out of our present mess.

Development finance, like charity, must start at home. Jordanians should not be childishly proud, as they presently are, of more foreign aid and external borrowing. Instead let's clean up our act so that we can depend more on our resources. To help us start moving along this path, an open system supported by a free press will make all the difference. Jordan's economic ills are critical, though not yet terminal. Bringing them out into the open will help, eventually leading to a greater emphasis on cleaner government and more self-reliance.

The option of confederation

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttah

PALESTINIAN LEADER Yasser Arafat surprised many last week when he suggested in a speech given to the People's Party annual conference that he was still in favour of a confederal solution between Palestine and Jordan.

Jordanian officials were quick to respond that it is premature to talk about the issue of confederation. They said that this issue should be talked about once an independent Palestinian state is established. Newspaper reports talked about the timing of Arafat's speech which followed a meeting with Israeli Labour Party leader Shimon Peres. Other commentators claimed that U.S. State Department official Martin Indyk had been behind the idea.

All these unsubstantiated rumours aside, the people of the region were surprised by Arafat's sudden announcement. Why now? A little background information will help.

The idea of a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation has been around for quite some time. The Palestinian National Council had approved the idea of the confederation of two independent states subject to the free and voluntary will of both peoples. The late PLO leader Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) repeatedly said that Palestinians wanted one minute of independence and then they will gladly go into a confederal agreement with Jordan.

The main objection of Jordanians to this idea is that if a Palestinian entity is not fully sovereign, Jordan will by extension lose some of its sovereignty. They also fear that in the long-term this will harm Jordanian national identity. With Palestinians constituting the business leadership and the majority of the population in a "United Arab Kingdom," such an alliance will further dilute Jordan's distinctive national political colour.

Jordanian officials also express fear that a premature discussion of confederation will play into the hands of the Israelis who are trying to deny Palestinian nationalism and statehood.

A few years ago, the late King Hussein gave an angry speech in which he said he no longer wanted to hear the word confederation. Since then, Palestinian officials have refrained from uttering this word.

But Arafat perhaps feels now is an opportune time to raise the issue again especially in light of the difficulties posed by May 4, 1999, which is the last day of the transitional self-rule period as stipulated in the Oslo agreement, and the date for a possible declaration of independence. This date happens to fall

13 days before the crucial Israeli national elections. Analysts believe that the Israeli public will no doubt be more supportive of the incumbent Netanyahu if such a declaration is carried out. The right-wing leader supports neither the confederation of such a state with Jordan one minute after its declaration or one minute before declaration.

The Labour Party on the other hand has always pushed for such a final status option. In the summer of 1994, when I interviewed the late Yitzhak Rabin, I asked him what he expected the future of the West Bank and Gaza will be in 15 years or more.

His answer was: "I hope it will be some kind of entity with special relations with Jordan."

Whether the idea of confederation plays into the hands of the Labour Party in Israel or not, there is no harm in talking about it. While Palestinian aspiration must remain focused on freedom and independence, there are many who are rethinking the long-term strategy.

A quick look at the world around us shows that in the 21st century states are grouping together for economic, social and even political benefit. Former enemies in Europe have all but removed political and economic borders between them. Why should the Middle East not think the same way. Most Palestinians agree that the coming Palestinian state should have special relations with both Israel and Jordan.

In addition to the idea of confederating with Jordan some go as far as talking about the need for Palestine to confederate with Israel. Others even suggest a three state confederation or even federation. What Palestinians as well as Jordanians and Israelis need, is the right and the opportunity to think out loud on all the different options. Israel has by and large refused to think about the long-term future of its closest neighbours. Jordanians and Palestinians should not be as fearful of thinking about the future. Denying the right to discuss any of these legitimate options is tantamount to burying one's head in the sand.

Letters to the editor

Letters of condolence

A moment of affection

WHILE WE have all been heaping considerable praise on His Majesty King Abdullah for the regal way he has conducted himself in the past difficult and emotionally charged three weeks, many of us may have missed a rare glimpse of the King affectionately putting his arm around HRH Princess Rania at the tarmac waiting for His Majesty King Hussein's plane to touch down from London on January 19. For me it was most touching to see King Abdullah displaying affection in public, especially as we belong to a culture that is timid at the show of feelings to members of his own family in public.

The sight of His Majesty King Abdullah affectionately holding his wife Princess Rania manifested a side of his character and personality that we all should cherish and be proud of.

Waleed M. Sadi
 Amman

TO HIS Majesty King Abdullah, Queen Noor, the Jordanian Royal family and the people of Jordan, I would like to express our deepest sympathy on the recent death of your beloved King Hussein. We spent a very pleasant holiday in Jordan last October and discovered just how the King was loved and respected by his people. Although he was abroad at the time, his presence was very obvious to us. We followed news of his illness and prayed for a recovery but sadly, this was not to be.

We took the people of Jordan very much to our hearts and found them very welcoming to us. We would like to wish the new King every success in his new role.

The Kelly family
 Monalee Heights
 Galway
 Ireland

TO OUR late King of peace, His Majesty King Hussein.

You may have left this world Your Majesty, but you are in our hearts and souls forever. What you have done to this nation and to the rest of the world is a great achievement. That makes us very proud to be Jordanians born and raised under you, Your Majesty.

We will support our King Abdullah as our King in everything he does. Please accept our condolences.

Faheem Sa'adeh Tashman and family
 Mafraq
 Omar Faheem Tashman and family
 U.S.

KING HUSSEIN was not only a King but a man of justice and peace. He was unique, someone who has made a difference to this world, who was loved by everyone. He was one of those people that you find only once in a millennium. He has now gone, he has done his duty here in this world and he has left to a better place, a place where he can now rest forever, a place where he can now be himself, a place where there is no war but only peace. He has gone to Paradise, his death has meant something to the world. It showed how much he has done and achieved and how much he will be missed and loved.

He is a man of wisdom and hope and will always stay in our hearts. His presence was a present to the world, and he shall never be forgotten.

Saad Al Turk
 Amman

KING AND Sharif of the Arabs, Abu Abdullah, our beloved King Hussein, You will always be remembered by your people and the whole world, and in the dark moonless nights we shall greatly miss the full moon King Hussein.

Ahmad Amer Al Shafai
 Amman

MY FAMILY and I would like to convey our deepest and sincere condolences to His Majesty King Abdullah and the Royal family. We hope that you may all find peace at this sad time.

Mohammed H. M. Alsubhi
 Canada

In March, a
 claiming to b

By Mark Row

NEW YORK — A man who claims to be a descendant of the prophet Muhammad has arrived in New York City. The man, who is 30 years old, is said to be a descendant of the prophet Muhammad through his mother. He is said to be a descendant of the prophet Muhammad through his mother. He is said to be a descendant of the prophet Muhammad through his mother.

Keeping

What th

By Dylan Loch

ABOUT 10 years ago, a busy city in the heart of the United States was hit by a major earthquake. The earthquake was so powerful that it caused widespread damage and loss of life. The city was left in ruins, and the people were left homeless. The earthquake was a major disaster for the city, and it took many years to rebuild. The city was left in ruins, and the people were left homeless. The earthquake was a major disaster for the city, and it took many years to rebuild.

2000 b

By Neil W

THE MILLENNIUM comes with all kinds of chaos and confusion. It is a time of great change and uncertainty. The world is in a state of flux, and the future is uncertain. The millennium is a time of great change and uncertainty. The world is in a state of flux, and the future is uncertain. The millennium is a time of great change and uncertainty. The world is in a state of flux, and the future is uncertain.

Yo-ho-ho, a bottle of rum and 77 acres of prime real estate in New York

In March, a New York court is to hear new evidence backing the descendants of Welsh pirate Robert Edwards, who are claiming to be the legal owners of 77 acres of what is now Manhattan, an area which includes Broadway, Wall Street and the World Trade Centre.

By Mark Rowe

A 17TH-CENTURY buccaneer reputedly given a large chunk of New York, including what is now Wall Street, as reward for raiding Spanish galleons, has inspired one of the world's biggest ever property claims.

In March a New York court is to hear new evidence backing the descendants of Welshman Robert Edwards, who are claiming about £414bn of New York real estate in a dispute that dates back 300 years. They believe they are the legal owners of 77 acres of what is now Manhattan, an area which includes Broadway, Wall Street and the World Trade Centre.

Around 5,400 descendants of the sailor are preparing for the case, which could pave the way for a full investigation into the history of their claim. If it were to be met in full, each descendant would be entitled to up to £80m.

Their claim dates to the reign of Queen Anne. Edwards is said to have received a parcel of land as a reward for raiding Spanish galleons loaded down with treasure

from the New World, though researchers believe he may actually have had a more mundane existence as an officer in the Royal Navy.

Legend and fact are difficult to separate in the life and times of Robert Edwards. He is believed to have been born in Llanymynech (now in Shropshire) and is thought to have arrived in New York in the late 1690s. His descendants believe he was given 77 acres of prime land by the British Crown. They say he — or his son — leased this land in 1778 to churchwardens of Trinity Church, now a substantial real estate owner in New York. At the end of the 99-year lease, the land was supposed to return to Edwards' six brothers and sisters or their descendants — but this failed to happen.

"This is one of the last great mysteries of this century," said Philip Berrill, an author and broadcaster who is researching the history of the Edwards heirs. "It's like a 10,000-piece jigsaw with little bits put into place as I go along." More than 2,000 people in Wales and England claim to be his descen-

dants while there are a further 3,280 in the U.S., mostly in Pennsylvania. There are others scattered across the world, from Gibraltar to South Africa.

Until now Trinity Church, which disputes the claims of Edwards' heirs, has relied on the statute of limitations, which means that a claim must be made within 15 years of the start of the dispute. But the heirs of Robert Edwards would be able to overturn the statute if they can demonstrate that there was an error in the way in which the leases were handed over.

"Trinity Church is an honourable body but in the late 1600s and early 1700s the land grants in New York were in a total mess," said Berrill. "The governor of New York, Colonel Fletcher, got wind that he was about to be sacked and so gave away every inch of New York he could lay his hands on. One of the groups to get some land was Trinity Church but an Act of Parliament revoked his deals."

"In 1702 Lord Cornbury, Queen Anne's cousin, was made governor and gave the church some more land. But he had a penchant for

'We now have evidence that Robert Edwards really existed at the right place, at the right time and paid taxes... But the legacy... has been a curse for many descendants'

dressing up in his wife's clothes and was allegedly arrested for posing as a prostitute on Broadway."

The confusion surrounding the circumstances under which the church was given the land has fuelled the hopes of thousands of Edwards' descendants. "At no time has one single shred of evidence relating to the original deeds granted to the church been tested in a U.S. court of law," said Berrill.

The March case deals with an alleged fraud in which descendants of Edwards are said to have lost millions of pounds from their fighting fund. It is not the first time they have been defrauded and lawyers will argue that the only way to avoid future fraud is to hold a full investigation into the legitimacy of their claims.

The lawyers will use the March hearing to bring forward new evidence uncovered in New York and the Public Record Office at Kew proving that a man called Robert Edwards actually existed and owned land in New York in the late 1690s. Up until now, Trinity Church has argued that Edwards never existed.

"This will really give us a lever to set up an official investigation," said Berrill. "We now have evidence that Robert Edwards really existed at the right place, at the right time and paid taxes. There is no reason on earth why he shouldn't have owned any land. In the past lawyers have said this could lead to business panic in New York."

But the legacy, if it exists at all, has been a curse for many descendants. Many have fallen prey to fraud while others chose to live beyond their means, anticipating a windfall. "There was a real passion and belief among many people that their boat would come in," said Berrill. "A number of Edwards absolutely believe they will get their money. If this claim proved to be more than a scam we'll have one of the sensations of the century. But even if an investigation is carried out, you can bet your boots that there will be a long battle in court to try and overturn any such decision. The heirs should keep buying their lottery tickets."

— The Independent

Keeping roving correspondents On-Line

What the cutting-edge journalist may someday wear

By Dylan Loeb McClain

THE TIME? About 10 years from now. The place? A busy city newsroom. The circumstances? A breaking story, perhaps a bombing.

A reporter grabs a notepad, a tape recorder and something else: A mobile journalist workstation that includes equipment that will plug the user into the Internet, allow transfer of information from editors and tap into a database of information about the reporter's surroundings. It includes eyeglasses with built-in liquid-crystal displays, a small high-speed wireless modem and a global positioning satellite hookup that can pinpoint a location to within 2.5 centimetres.

It is a vision of the future that a group at Columbia University in New York — John Pavlik, director of the Journalism School's Centre for New Media, Steven Feiner, a professor of computer sciences, and some of their students — is working to make into a reality. A prototype of the workstation, about the size of a large backpack, is being developed with about \$120,000 a year in grants from the Office of Naval Research and the National Tele-Immersion Initiative, an organisation that promotes the use of computer networking technology.

The system works interactively. In the future, a miniature camera may make it possible to beam images from remote

spots to a home base, such as a newsroom or a television studio.

Mr. Pavlik said the workstation, if eventually shrunk to an easily portable size, could become an important information-gathering tool, giving "better access through wireless technologies to a wide spectrum of information, including the Internet, but also to remotely located experts and editors." It could provide immediate context for reporting, he added, leading to greater accuracy.

The project was not originally developed as a reporter's tool.

Mr. Feiner was researching what is called mobile augmented reality when he and Mr. Pavlik realised its journalistic possibilities. Mr. Feiner said he hoped to make the workstation no larger than a handheld radio and reduce the cost to about \$150 so that it would appeal to ordinary consumers. He said travellers could use it as an aid in exploring cities, "something akin to a Michelin guide."

The Office of Naval Research has less pedestrian uses in mind: It wants the workstation to provide information to soldiers on a battlefield. Dr. Larry Rosenblum, a researcher at the Naval Research Laboratories, said, "we want to give a Marine a natural interface without having him have to stop and punch into a computer."

— The International Herald Tribune

Two professors at Columbia University in New York are working on a prototype system that would enable journalists on assignment, and others, to download information from the Internet and provide information about their surroundings. Although the system is in its early stages, here is how it works, for now.

CURRICLES AND HEADGEAR

Carry information about the surroundings. Sensors tell the system which way the wearer's head is turned so the system knows what he is looking at.

Through the eyeglasses, the user sees the surroundings and a menu of options.

PORTABLE COMPUTER

The system's nerve center: A portable computer with a radio network for connecting to the Internet and the user's home base.

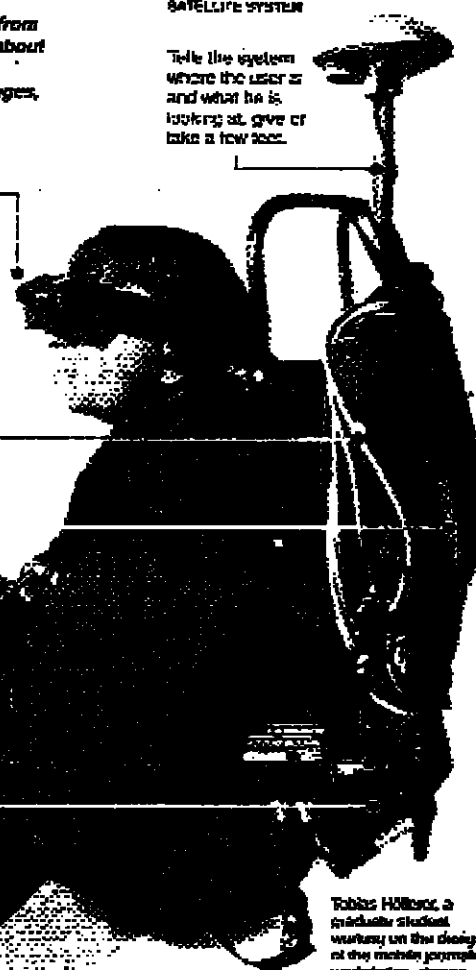
Handheld computer for controlling the system.

BATTERY PACK

Radio network used by the global positioning satellite system.

Radio network used by the global positioning satellite system.

They Worked on a New Team Photo



Unplugged

By Jean-Claude Elias

chip talk

ONE OF the most annoying aspects of personal computing is having to put up with an unreasonable number of external cables.

Typically each of the peripherals connected to the PC casing requires two cables, one to supply it with power and the other (the data cable) to carry the data from and to the computer. Some components, like external modems and special sound cards, may require three or more cables while others need only one to work, like the mouse for instance. An average PC configuration will have about 10 cables. With a scanner and one additional device like an external removable hard disk, this number can be as high as 15 or 18. It's ugly, cumbersome, inefficient, and accident-prone. Even tech-heads agree.

In spite of all the technological advancement, there doesn't seem to be a good solution to that problem. Or rather, designers don't seem to give it enough attention. Except maybe for those who designed Apple's new "iMac" computer, a machine where most components — though not all — are well integrated in the main casing.

But the question of "spaghetti" cables is not entirely a problem per se.

Keeping components outside the PC's main box gives the user the flexibility to remove, disconnect, replace or repair them quickly, easily and in an inexpensive way. Many people buy external modems instead of internal ones just to be able to move them between different machines for example. If you're done with your old 14" monitor and have just bought a new 17" model, unplug the old one and connect the new in a few seconds — et voilà. Imagine doing the same with an integrated, built-in screen.

For those who absolutely hate to see the tangle created by computer cabling, designers propose a couple of compromise solutions that work well. The first consists of tidying up the mess by using commercially available plastic ties and especially designed strips. It may sound obvious and ridiculously simple, but I have rarely seen people using them. For as little as 15 or 20 dinars you can sort all your computer

cabling in an elegant and practical manner.

The second approach is a little more sophisticated, and can be used in addition to the first. It consists of using the wireless feature that some peripherals can be fitted with. The computer industry offers a wide array of wireless keyboards, mice, printers and multimedia speakers.

This is already more than half of the total cabling you would have to put up with. The wireless mouse, particularly, is a very handy device for it is a component that you constantly move. We all know how unpleasant it can be pulling the mouse cable every now and then to readjust its position on the pad.

There are two types of wireless devices: those that use infrared technology and those that use radio frequencies. Each presents different advantages. Infrared is safer for it does not interfere with eventual reception of radio FM programmes or wireless phone sets you may be listening to or using in the same room. On the other hand devices based on radio frequencies gives you more flexibility of movement than infrared for you don't have to position them in a predefined, more or less narrow angle facing the receiving port — like a TV infrared remote control. Most new PCs include an infrared port but these have been rarely used till now.

The war against spaghetti computer cables should be fought on three fronts. Firstly try to keep devices inside the computer as much as possible. For example, if you are not sharing the modem with another computer, buy an internal model instead of an external one, you'll save a couple of cables. Secondly, do use the plastic ties, strips and ducts to make things more presentable, these are available in most computer shops and in major bookshops in Amman. Thirdly, convert one or two of your peripherals to wireless. A smart combination of these three methods will make your PC setup more manageable, better looking, and safer.

2000 bug may induce risky nuclear limbo

By Neil Winton

Reuters

THE MILLENNIUM computer bug may trigger all kinds of chaos across the world when clocks strike midnight at the end of this year, but it won't accidentally fire off any nuclear weapons.

Experts believe that the risk of an accidental firing of nuclear weapons as clocks tick into 2000 is more or less zero.

That is very good news considering that the United States has just over 12,000 nuclear weapons in its stockpile, and Russia 22,500.

"Warheads won't explode in their silos due to computer error. They won't launch by mistake (at midnight)," said Michael Kraig, author of a report published by the independent research group the British American Security Information Council.

The worry is that millennium bug-induced failures in communications systems and early warning radar might set off a nuclear exchange later. Nothing would happen at midnight on December 31, but disaster may strike in the hours after midnight.

Something similar nearly happened in 1980. U.S. nuclear warning personnel saw what turned out to be phantom Russian missiles homing in on the United States. Checks showed this was a false alarm, caused by a faulty chip costing less than 50 cents.

The millennium bug problem, where some computers may be unable to handle the century change from 1999 to 2000, has reawakened fears that the world faces an

accidental nuclear holocaust.

Most worries centre on Russia. Kraig told Reuters that although the United States has some gaps in its anti-millennium bug preparations much progress had been made. Russian preparations were not so impressive.

"Russia has no programme. Early warning data sharing may not be agreed. What are they doing? They are doing nothing," Kraig said.

Kraig praised the agreement last September between U.S.

President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin under which Washington and Moscow agreed to exchange key personnel who would work together to make sure phantom launches were quickly spotted.

But he said more direct moves, such as switching off systems, should be taken to remove the threat posed by both sides' "launch on warning" policy.

"The dangers of a Y2K meltdown, even if restricted to a few key systems, are intensified by the Russian and American policy of 'launch on warning,'" Kraig said in the report published in December.

"If Y2K breakdowns produce inaccurate early-warning data, or if communications and command channels are compromised, the combination of hair-trigger force postures and Y2K failures could be disastrous." "For all these reasons, there should be a safety-first approach to Y2K and nuclear arsenals. All the nuclear weapons states should stand down nuclear operations. This approach should include taking nuclear weapons off alert status or decou-

pling nuclear weapons from delivery vehicles," the report said.

Olivia Bosch, research associate at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), believes it is unlikely the United States or Russia will agree publicly to switch systems off.

"If they switched them off some bad guys might come in and make mischief. They might, in fact, switch them off and not tell anybody," Bosch said.

She was confident too, that all would be well.

"I'm confident that preparations are in hand. One can't be 100 per cent sure that will work perfectly, but all the good intentions are there." Some experts worry that these "bad guys" — rogue states, for example — might seek to exploit any confusion caused by a communications blackout or a failure in U.S. or Russian defence systems.

"Mischievous-makers, yes absolutely, they will always be looking at opportunities to say, look, a U.S. computer went wrong and did this," said Paul Beaver, consultant at the defence publisher Janes.

Edwin Lyman, scientific director at the Nuclear Control Institute in Washington, D.C., does not believe there is a danger of any spontaneous launches of nuclear weapons, but that disruption in information and surveillance could lead to instability. Lyman agrees that Russia's preparations are lagging, but said this was not surprising.

"I believe the Russian government is doing its best, but realistically, given the state of their economy, they have to

address immediate day-to-day needs, even food and clothing is not being supplied adequately. In the face of such immediacy, it's hard to see how a problem 11 months away would get the level of financing," Lyman said.

"So there is great concern the U.S. should provide emergency assistance," he added.

Janes' Beaver said he also was not concerned that nuclear missiles will launch or warheads explode. But he, too, worried that computers might induce problems later.

"I'm concerned with two areas (in Russia), the capacity of the nuclear power generation system to cope, and whether air defence screen and computer driven early warning systems will still be compatible," Beaver said.

Other dates might also trip up slovenly programmed computers.

"I'm more concerned about nine, nine, ninety nine and the leap year in 2000. Some computer programmes don't include the leap year in 2000 and I worry that this may trigger chaos," Beaver said.

Some computer calendars don't realise 2000 is a leap year.

Leap years are fixed using a complicated formula going back 400 years for adjusting dates to offset a slight imbalance between the length of a year and the amount of time the earth revolves around the sun.

Nine, nine, ninety nine is shorthand for September 9, 1999.

Computer programmers often used a cluster of nines to signal to a computer programme that it must switch off.

Economists say Lebanon must wean economy off debt

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's latest sovereign bond issue is a short-term boost to an economy steeped in debt but the government must quickly find sources of revenue other than borrowing, economists said Wednesday.

Lebanon said this week it was marketing a five-year, \$300-\$400 million issue, including the Middle East's first Eurobonds. Financiers said it would be priced on Thursday.

Economists said Lebanon, a veteran at tapping global debt markets, would have no trouble placing the issue with traditional investors such as Beirut banks and wealthy expatriates.

The novelty of euro-dominated paper will attract a different league of buyers seeking relatively stable emerging market debt.

But they said the government, which last year spent 175 per cent of revenue, was jeopardising the economy by depending on borrowing.

"It's a lousy idea for a country with an enormous deficit to borrow heavily in a foreign currency," said Aboudi Najia, Middle East and North Africa analyst at London-based Nomura Securities.

"It makes short-term economic sense to borrow to manage the debt but this rollover can't continue forever. Five years is not a long time and the consequences of not paying up are catastrophic," he told Reuters.

Lebanon has borrowed heavily to rebuild an economy gutted by 15 years of civil war. It launched the region's maiden Eurobond

in 1994 and now has about \$2.5 billion of outstanding issues.

Almost eight years after the war, Lebanon is still living beyond its means, due to a bloated state sector and an \$18 million public debt financed mainly by treasury bills carrying average yields of 14 per cent.

"The government is caught in a dilemma that they did not create but their options are limited," said Michael Young, editor of newsletter the Lebanon Report.

"The debt is expanding at a rate higher than revenues so they must either increase income or depreciate the pound, which will impoverish the people. They must come up with a plan," he added.

Morgan Stanley Dean Witter assigned a neutral

rating to Lebanon's foreign debt last month, saying its "fiscal policy has been unequivocally bad."

Economists conceded alternative sources of cash were limited but said the new government must find them, particularly before issuing its 1999 budget that will be scrutinised by investors.

"They have to work hard because between servicing the enormous debt and paying salaries, there's little to finance growth," Ghassan Al Rifai, principal World Bank adviser for policy in the Middle East and North Africa, told Reuters.

"Privatisation is an obvious option, as is increasing the tax base and making utilities more efficient. They have to adopt a multi-pronged approach," he stressed.

Bahrain attracts \$3b in '98 investments

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain attracted a total of \$3 billion worth of investments last year, the head of a promotions board for the Gulf archipelago state has said.

Robin Marriott, acting chief executive of the Bahrain Promotions and Marketing Board (BPMB), did not give a breakdown of the investments but said a portion could have flown in through the stock market.

"Bahrain is such a free economy, it is not always easy to tabulate figures," he said, quoted in the Gulf Daily News. Marriott said most investments in 1998 came from India but Europe was lagging behind. "In Europe, not only is awareness about Bahrain low, but what awareness there is negative," he acknowledged. BPMB is to launch a drive in Europe this year.

Oman aims for 25,000 new jobs for nationals in '99

MUSCAT (AFP) — Labour Minister Amer Ben Shwain Al Hossani said this week he aimed to create 25,000 new private sector jobs in 1999 for Omani citizens through nationalisation schemes.

"In 1998, we aimed to find work for 20,000 Omanis and we found jobs for 19,720. We hope to find jobs for 25,000 Omanis in

the private sector in 1999," the social affairs, labour and vocational training minister told reporters.

He said there were just over 25,000 job-seekers registered with his ministry.

According to official figures, the sultanate has a population of about two million, one quarter of whom are foreigners, mostly from the Indian subconti-

nent employed in construction.

Oman deported some 66,000 illegal immigrants last year, mostly Asians, the minister said.

The government imposes a quota on private sector firms to hire Omani nationals, from 30 per cent in the hotel industry to 60 per cent in the transport sector. Meanwhile, Oman is to

issue three-year local bonds for a total of 82 million riyals (\$213 million) in 1999 to help finance development projects, the central bank has announced.

The first bonds will go on offer to the public — Omanis and foreigners — on March 1, with a coupon rate of eight per cent, to be paid every six months. The government started

to issue development bonds in 1991 to pump savings and banking investments into a series of ambitious industrial and infrastructure projects, notably in gas and shipping.

Treasury bonds are also issued, but with six-month maturity.

The Gulf state has cut government spending by seven per cent and plans to raise taxes in its 1999 budget in a bid to increase state revenue in the face of low oil prices.

The 1999 budget deficit has been forecast at 631 million riyals (\$1.6 billion), double that of last year.

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, February 18-19, 1999

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 17-02-99 ACCESS 4646868

CURRENCY	UNIT	JO	US	EURO	JPY	GBP	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR	USD	GBP	JPY	AUD	HKD	SGD	THB	MYR	PHP	IDR	INR	PKR	BDT	TL	TRY	EGP	SDG	LRD	NGN	UGX	KEA	SHS	MTL	MLT	MDL	RON	HRK	BAL	ISK	CHF	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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Kuwait Bank boosts net profit by 41 per cent in 1998

**** THE JORDAN Kuwait Bank** generated JD4.4 million net profit last year, a 41 per cent surge over the JD3.1 million posted in 1997, said Abdul Karim Kabari, the bank's board chairman. He added that the net interest and commissions were higher by JD3.35 million, or 29 per cent, over the 1997 figure. Kabari said the bank settled all its tax obligations until the end of 1997 by paying JD964,000.

The balance sheet at the end of 1988 totalled JD346.6 million, an 11.2 per cent increase over the total at the end of 1997. Shareholders' equity rose by 7.7 per cent to JD34.7 million and allocations for doubtful debts were beefed up by 23 per cent to reach JD7.0 million. The capital adequacy ratio was 20.3 per cent, much higher than the 12 per cent required by the Central Bank. The

portfolio of deposits by customers and banks increased by 10 per cent from JD251 million to JD277 million. Cash margins (deposits) went up by 62 per cent from JD12.5 million to JD20.24 million.

Kabari said the bank succeeded last year in consolidating the base of its clients by attracting a number of high net worth customers from both the public and private sectors. He added the bank also provided direct credits and syndicated loans for this group of customers. Other accomplishments were in the organisational and administrative spheres, especially in developing and updating the systems and the operational mechanisms in accordance with the latest technologies and the requirements for the year 2000 (Al Aswaq).

Storing gas is costly, says general manager of Jordan Petroleum Refinery

**** THE COST** of raising the storage capacity of gas from 15 days to one month comes to about \$40 million and if the period is to be for two months the cost of storage goes up to \$100 million, said Abdul Wahab Al Zou'bi, general manager of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company. He pointed out that the cost of storing one tonne of gas is JD1,000 whereas the storage cost for other petroleum derivatives is about JD60.

As such, he added, it is internationally accepted to follow a balanced pol-

icy between the strategic stocks, the volume of imports and the volume produced by the refinery itself.

Zou'bi said the company's storage capacity for gas is now around 16,500 tonnes after the completion of storage facilities in Aqaba. The amount, he added, covers the Kingdom's needs for 17 days during the winter season and 33 days during the rest of the year. He indicated that gas consumption in winter is about 80,000 cylinders a day or the equivalent of 1,000 tonnes (Al Ra'i).

Jordan debt survives King's death

LONDON (R) — Pledges of support from multilateral and bilateral lenders to Jordan following King Hussein's death this month should give comfort to investors in its dollar debt. London-based analysts said Wednesday.

Jordan's benchmark Brady bonds, essentially restructured foreign currency debt, fell four percentage points to 50-1/2 bid after news on Feb. 5 that the Monarch was ailing rapidly. But the bonds bounced back shortly afterwards as pledges of support started to roll in from the United States and the Arab Gulf states. Jordan's par bonds traded on Wednesday at 56 bid.

The Bradys dipped

slightly before King Hussein's death but then following his death, with the pledges coming in, the debt fully recovered and I wouldn't expect to see any change in that," said Jerome Booth of ANZ emerging fund management.

Hopes of fresh IMF funding have been key to the optimism. Jordan, which is just coming out of a three-year extended fund facility (EFF) programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is also expected to finalise a new agreement with the IMF in coming days.

Analysts said the new EFF programme, which is expected to total between \$300 million and \$450 mil-

lion, would also help underpin the country's creditworthiness and the price of its debt.

"The sovereign default risk is still very low because although it is an aid-dependent country, the aid is there and it will continue to be there because of the strategic importance of the country," said Booth.

"They are a good buy but they are probably a buy for the yield because if you wanted capital upside you would want something that was going to move a bit faster and a bit sooner," he added.

Longer term, analysts said the political uncertainty and the country's strategic position in the Middle East would remain key issues for

investors. Internal domestic political change, Jordan's relationship with Iraq and the upcoming Israeli elections in May were three important pieces of the puzzle not yet known.

"After King Hussein's death, there is uncertainty," said Adrian Khoo, economist and debt strategist at Banque Paribas in London. "The relationship between the new King and Israel, Syria and Iraq is still uncertain."

Booth at ANZ, however, said he did not foresee any problems for Jordan repaying its Brady debt.

Jordan is currently rated BB-minus by Standard and Poor's corp and BA3 by Moody's Investors Service

Inc. "When the Jordan debt traded down to 52-53 there were a lot of inquiries," said one London-based emerging debt analyst, who said he expected the debt to trade back up to around 60 bid after the IMF deal was sealed.

Another potential positive was a reduction of sanctions against neighbouring Iraq, which is traditionally Jordan's biggest trading partner. would be an enormous benefit to the country.

They also said if a liberal leader emerged from Israel's elections, Jordan would benefit because from the improved chances for a more sustainable peace accord in the Middle East.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You've got a tailwind today. It's a combination of a push of support and a bit of pressure, because you're in a little behind on something you promised. So although you're moving quickly, there may be some anxiety going on simultaneously. That's fine. You tend to use anxiety as a motivator, and it's a good one.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like people are coming up with all kinds of wonderful ideas today. The only trouble is, they want you to do way too much of the work. That's your assessment of the situation anyway, most likely. You're going to have to speak up. Let them know when they've piled on enough.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Don't dash off and do something today just because of a friend's suggestion. Better check and make sure that's what your client or your boss wants. Unless your friend is paying your salary, his or her opinion, is well... an opinion. Sorry, but that's all it amounts to. You can do projects like that on your own time.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Today, it may look like you have a problem, but again, you're really quite lucky. Just mind your P's and Q's and do what you're told. To gain even more points, do it before anyone has to mention. You've got nice plans ahead, but don't let them distract you. Be where you're supposed to be at exactly the right time.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) Fun, games and maybe even a few surprises are in store for you today. Don't wait for tomorrow to start your weekend. Make it happen now. A person you know with a very different background from yours is your perfect companion. Get somebody like that to teach you a new game today. You'll be surprised at how well you do!

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) People will be anxious today, and they're not going to hold back about it. Expect to get heat today if things are not done perfectly, on time and exactly the way they're supposed to be done. Just keep your head down, do your work and then get out of there.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Looks like a strong partner has the whole agenda laid out. All you have to do is jump in the car and take off. There's nothing else to be done. Well, yes there is. You could check over the list one more time just to make sure your friend hasn't skipped something important, like the picnic lunch, for example.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You're in a raging mood again today, raring to go. Make sure you stay on track. Your emphasis must be on work and getting a difficult job done. If you concentrate, you'll be able to produce what eight or nine ordinary people would do in the same amount of time. You're amazing when you get like this.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're coming up with all kinds of great ideas today. You might surprise yourself with your brilliance and creativity. Partially, you're using what you've learned recently, and partially you're making things up, but you've got a very good knack for guessing accurately. If you were doing this for money, you'd make yourself rich.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Looks like there's a controversy going on at your house, but it's kind of a good one. Things are getting stirred up, and it's for the better. It almost looks like you have too much of something; it could even be too much of a good thing, but you'll think of a way to put it to use.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) This is going to be a fun evening, a good night to go out and rock and roll. Your friends have probably already made several interesting suggestions, and you can come up with more on your own. The basic idea is to get out tonight, take a few risks and get rowdy.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Today, you can be creative and loving and all the things you do so well without even having the slightest little bit of self-consciousness or self-doubt. A brilliant idea you have could even help you make more money. That might not be your primary objective, but it never hurts, especially if you're going to go around and buy gifts.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

Egypt's bourse modernises, aims for leading role

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's stock exchanges announced Wednesday they would have a fully computerised system by the end of the year that they hoped would give them a leading role in the region. "Today we are introducing our integrated solution system," Sameh Al Torgoman, chairman of the Cairo and Alexandria stock exchanges, told a news conference.

The bourses aimed to increase the number of local investors to five million from a current half a million and to attract more foreigners once the new system was in place, he said.

"We hope with this system we will play a leading role in the region partly because many countries have selected the same system," said Torgoman, citing Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Pakistan. The new system was being installed by Efa Software Services Ltd of Canada, with the final software due in August.

The integrated software, which will cost an estimated 14 to 17 million pounds (\$4-5 million), includes an automated trading system, integrated clearing, settlement and depository and an advanced surveillance facility.

There are 876 companies listed on both exchanges, which traded more than 200 million pounds in the first week of February, up from 150 million in the whole of January, Torgoman said.

BA crashes into first loss for four years

LONDON (AFP) — British Airways (BA) suffered its first loss for almost four years in the third quarter of its 1998 financial year, after taking a multi-million charge for yend-denominated debts. The company said that it had also suffered from "difficult market conditions" in Asia.

The crash in quarterly results, which saw a loss for the first time since early 1995 and the first third-quarter loss since 1987, wiped 39 per cent off BA's nine-month profits to 310 million pounds (434 million euros, \$508 million) before tax.

The paltry figures did little to lift the dark storm clouds that have gathered over the airline, which just a few years ago billed itself as the world's most profitable and "favourite" airline.

BA chief executive Bob Ayling has still met with no success in realising his dream of an all-inclusive alliance with American Airlines which was first floated in 1996.

The company said that it had lost 75 million pounds (105 million euros, \$123 million) in the three months to January after taking a charge of 117 million pounds for yen debts to finance the acquisition of airlines.

Japanese investors flee to foreign markets in 1998

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese investors fled to foreign markets in 1998 as the Tokyo stock market slumped, while foreign investors cut back Japanese equity purchases, the finance ministry has said.

Japanese investors bought a net 11.3 trillion yen (\$100 billion) worth of foreign shares and bonds in 1998, sharply up from 3.7 trillion yen in 1997, the ministry said.

Net purchases of foreign bonds by Japanese investors surged from 2.0 trillion yen to 9.5 trillion

yen while net buying of foreign stocks rose from 1.6 trillion yen to 1.8 trillion yen, it said.

Foreign investors' purchases of Japanese equities dropped from 6.1 trillion yen to 2.8 trillion yen, the ministry said.

Net purchases of Japanese bonds in 1998 fell by about 70 per cent to 829.6 billion yen, from 2.7 trillion yen the year before, it said.

Foreign investors bought a net 1.9 trillion yen in shares last year, down from 3.3 trillion yen the previous year.

ARIES:

(March 21 to April 19) By now you should know how to play by the rules.

and that's important, because when you do that, you can go a lot faster. And if you've been doing the homework, you'll have the skills you need to take off like a rocket and land safely on your upcoming expedition. Do just a little more planning today.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The sun is going into Pisces. Pisces is in your solar 11th house of teams and friends, so teamwork is going to be the big focus for the next month or so. Even if you have a heavy load, you're not going to be pulling it all by yourself, starting now.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Today, you'll know who your friends are. They're bringing you good luck, but also a little stern coaching. That's important, because sometimes you get side-tracked. As the sun goes into Pisces tomorrow, your career opportunities start opening up. If you've been going down the homework, you'll be ready when opportunity knocks.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) An older person could get on your case today, noting every place where you've bent the rules. Don't you just love it when this happens? The good news is that you should do well on this little exam. You might even get a raise out of the deal, if you're properly respectful and obedient. Watch your manners.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) This is the first day the sun is in Pisces. Its effects should start to become noticeable, but it's a little difficult to tell, since the moon in Aries makes you feel so vibrant and alive. You could be dreaming of setting sail for the South Pacific, you and your crew of very best friends. That's the kind of adventure you might launch into today.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) There's more than enough money, if you know where to get it. Today, you could get it with the help of your partner. The two of you could take out a loan for something you'd like to do at home. Go ahead and make big plans. You can probably make it happen.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Looks like a strong, assertive type is trying

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

You're more attractive than assertive, yourself. You'd rather draw people to you than go running after them, and that's a technique that works pretty well.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) The work is finally starting to come, in, and there's plenty of it. You're going to have to move quickly in order to keep up. Your mind may still be on your personal life, but you're going to have to set that aside, just for a little while. Its more important right now that you finish an assignment on time.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There's no shortage of love now. In fact, you might have more than you know what to do with. What you'd like to do is run off together to distant places. But if you're really going to go "heads California, tails Carolina," make the commitment to each other first. That's where you'll get the strength to persevere.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) You're feeling more intelligent, or at least more curious. You're interested in what's going on around you, and you'll be asking questions. You might even cause a bit of disruption around your house tonight. There is some resistance, but that's OK. If your idea has been worked out well, you'll end up with what you want.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You're learning quickly today, and if you're wise, you'll still be learning about money. That will be your theme for the next several weeks. You'll probably have less pocket change, because you've thought of new ways to spend it, so be careful. Instead of having more through a recent benefit, you could actually wind up with less.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You feel like spending money today, and since you love to buy presents for everybody, that's the first thing that comes to mind. You see how many people need things you could provide, and that's just exactly what you want to do. Well, take care today. Don't spend more money than you have. Save enough for food and rent.

The American Center for Oriental Research,
The British Institute at Amman for Archaeology & History,
The German Protestant Institute,
The French Institute of Archaeology for the Near East
The Italian Archaeological Mission, Petra National Trust and
The Spanish Archaeological Missions
mourn with deep grief the late

King Hussein Ben Talal

(May God bless his soul)

and wish to offer

His Majesty King Abdullah

and the Royal Hashemite Family

heartfelt condolences and sympathy imploring

God Almighty to bless the late King's soul

The AMERICAN WOMEN OF AMMAN
would like to express their deep sadness
and grief at the passing away of

His Majesty

King Hussein Ben Talal

He was a great man who will
be sorely missed by his family,
country and the world at large.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the
Hashemite Royal Family and
the people of Jordan

Long Live

King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein

May God be with him and
all the people of Jordan

A.F.M TRADE Wednesday, 17-02-99

Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	215.500	215.000	-0.23%
NTL BK	1.570	1.550	-1.27%
BK OF JORDAN	1.380	1.380	0.00%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.330	1.310	-1.51%
THE HOUSING BK	2.960	2.980	+2.38%
JO KUWAIT BK	1.700	1.680	-0.59%
JO ISLAMIC BK	1.780	1.780	0.00%
UNION BK	1.000	1.000	0.00%
JO INVEST. & FIN. BK	1.380	1.380	0.00%
ARAB BING COR	2.500	2.630	+5.20%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.550	0.550	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	283.570	point =	-0.53%
INSURANCE			
JO GULF INS	1.770	1.680	-5.08%
INSURANCE INDEX	124.600	point =	-0.46%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.770	1.770	0.00%
URBID ELECTRICITY	1.700	1.700	0.00%
REAL ESTATE	1.080	1.060	-1.85%
JO INTL TRADING CENT	0.260	0.260	0.00%
AL-RAI	7.300	7.250	-0.68%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.880	0.890	+1.14%
ARAB INTL FOR INVS. & E	2.000	2.000	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.180	1.190	+0.85%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INV	1.050	1.060	+0.95%
SERVICES INDEX	115.620	point =	-0.07%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.680	3.650	-0.82%
PHOSPHATE	2.380	2.370	-0.42%
ARAB POTASH	4.170	4.150	-0.48%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.880	10.850	-0.28%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRICU	1.090	1.110	+1.83%
JO PHARMACEUTICAL	3.200	3.170	-0.94%
CERAMIC IND	1.370	1.360	-0.73%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.510	1.540	+1.98%
NTL STEEL	0.530	0.520	-1.89%
DAR AL DAWA	5.680	5.700	+0.35%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.570	0.570	0.00%
JO STEEL	0.850	0.850	0.00%
CHLORINE	1.230	1.230	0.00%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.420	0.410	-2.38%
NTL IND	0.380	0.380	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.310	0.310	0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE	1.060	1.050	-0.94%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0.450	0.460	+2.22%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.340	1.340	0.00%
KAWTHER	0.370	0.370	0.00%
EL-ZAY	1.310	1.310	0.00%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.670	0.650	-2.98%
IND. RESOURCES	0.440	0.450	+2.27%
NEW CAPLES	0.610	0.620	+1.64%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.790	0.790	0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX	96.620	point =	-0.41%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK	0.920	0.920	0.00%
JO TRADING FACILITIES	0.380	0.380	0.00%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.900	0.900	0.00%
AL - EKBAL	0.880	0.880	-1.12%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.530	0.530	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.450	0.450	0.00%
AL DAWLAH	0.620	0.620	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORES	1.000	1.010	+1.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.420	0.430	+2.38%

Keegan on verge of being named England coach

LONDON (AP) — Kevin Keegan seemed certain to be named England's new coach Wednesday with almost every newspaper in the country saying the former star striker had the job.

Keegan, 48, who began talks Monday with the English FA after initially ruling himself out because of his contract with division two Fulham, would succeed Glenn Hoddle, who was fired Feb. 2 after alleged remarks about the disabled.

Despite widespread reports that Keegan has been offered the job — and will be allowed to stay in charge of Fulham — David Davies, interim FA executive director, suggested caution on Wednesday. He said there were things being reported that he "didn't recognise. And I'm in the middle of the talks."

"We are making progress on this matter," Davies said. "We always said we hope to have to something positive to say in the middle of this week and I hope we're on schedule."

Davies said talks over the coaching job were held until just before midnight on Tuesday with an announcement expected Wednesday.

In the 1970s, Keegan was England's top international and played 63 times for the national team. At Liverpool, he led the side to its first European Champions Cup triumph in 1977 and later, after a transfer to Hamburg, led the German side to the Bundesliga title and was twice named European player of the year.

His only coaching experience previous to Fulham came at Newcastle, where he led the team to promotion to the Premier League, but then saw his side blow a 12-point lead and



A file photo taken 20 October 1996 shows Fulham director, Kevin Keegan, who is expected to be named England's new coach (AFP photo)

finish second to Manchester United in the 1995-96 season. Some questions still remain about his ability to deal with a high-profile, high-pressure coaching situation.

Former England coach Bobby

Robson, who said he was interested in the job and was in an early list of candidates, doubted that Keegan could succeed as a part-time coach.

"No, I don't think so at all," Robson said. "After six weeks of

the job with England I realised to do two jobs at club and international level would be impossible."

"It is not in my opinion a part-time job in any way at all," he added. "If Kevin decides the only way he can take job is on a part-time basis, he would certainly need Howard Wilkinson to run the show behind his back. Those two people would have to get on famously ... Kevin would find it extremely difficult to do both sides."

Keegan spent Monday and Tuesday at home in northeast England and returned to London Wednesday to run a practice at Fulham. He declined to comment but one of his players offered an endorsement.

"It's a tremendous prospect, isn't it," said John Salako, a Fulham forward and former England international winger. "He's larger than life isn't he, Kevin Keegan, he's done a great job here."

Reports suggested former England international Peter Beardsley would assist Keegan with the national side.

Wilkinson, who took over the side on an interim basis after Hoddle was fired and coached England to a 2-0 loss last week against World Cup champion France, is expected to return to his job at the FA with an emphasis on under-age teams.

"In all this, Howard's long-term plans for the restructuring of the football side of the FA are equally exciting and nothing will be done to jeopardise them," Davies said. "Howard is very much involved in the discussions we are having."

Cantona voted United's greatest

LONDON (R) — Frenchman Eric Cantona, who led Manchester United to two English FA Cup and league doubles in 1994 and 1996, has been voted the greatest player in the club's 107-year history.

Cantona, 32, who retired at the end of the 1996-97 season to pursue a career in acting, pipped George Best into second place with Ryan Giggs third.

The poll among United's fans was organised by Manchester United's official club magazine United, the highest selling soccer magazine in Britain.

Manager Alex Ferguson told the magazine: "he (Cantona) was the catalyst for the championships. He brought a vision that we did not have before. He was an absolutely phenomenal player."

Giggs said: "He was the best footballer I have ever seen," while Denis Law, who finished 10th in the voting and has for three decades been known as "the

king of Old Trafford" added: "I can't think of anyone who I would rather wear my crown."

Cantona scored 80 goals in 182 appearances for United between October 1992 and 1997 and won the nomination despite his notorious assault on a racist fan when Manchester United played Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park in January 1995.

The attack, when he leapt over the barrier to launch a kung-fu kick at a palace fan, earned him a record eight-month suspension, but his return in October 1995 inspired United to the double the following May.

He scored the winning goal in the FA Cup final against Liverpool to secure the club's second double in three seasons.

The mercurial Frenchman was a member of the Leeds team that won the title in 1992 before moving to United.

His honours at Old Trafford also include the

title in 1993 and 1997, three charity shield victories and being named England's Footballer of the Year in 1996.

The remainder of the top 10 comprises Bobby Charlton in fourth place, Bryan Robson fifth, Duncan Edwards sixth, Peter Schmeichel seventh, David Beckham eighth, Mark Hughes ninth and Denis Law 10th.

Of the current side playing for United, Andy Cole was voted 15th, Roy Keane 17th, Paul Scholes 18th, Dwight Yorke 21st, Denis Irwin 24th, Gary Neville 28th, Phil Neville 46th, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer 48th and Jaap Stam 50th.

As well as Edwards, who died as a result of his injuries in the Munich air disaster in 1958, three other members of the Busby Babes who died in the crash are nominated — Roger Byrne (13th), Tommy Taylor (14th) and Eddie Colman (36th).

Woman cannot mention other suits in claim against Rodman

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A cocktail waitress who accused Dennis Rodman of fondling her cannot mention previous lawsuits against him in her own suit, a judge ruled Tuesday.

But the woman, Susan Patterson, did win a ruling that allows her to keep a claim of emotional distress in her lawsuit.

Patterson, who works at the Fenix in the Argyle Hotel in West Hollywood, also accused Rodman of assault, battery, negligence and false imprisonment. She sued on Nov. 10, five weeks after she says she was assaulted.

Her lawsuit cited assault claims by other women in Nevada and Utah, but the judge granted a request to delete mention of them in the Patterson case.

"We hope it sends a message that the focus is not going to be on what happened in these other lawsuits," said Rich Howell, Rodman's lawyer.

The former Chicago Bulls star, who appears close to signing with the Los Angeles Lakers, is accused of jamming a \$100 bill down Patterson's blouse and fondling her.

Rodman pursued her into a corner and continued lunging at her even after she folded into a fetal position, the suit says. She finally got away by crawling into the kitchen area, it says.

Patterson seeks general and punitive damages, which would be determined at trial. No date was set.

Coach Courbis pledges future to Marseille

PARIS (R) — Olympique Marseille received a timely morale-boost from coach Roland Courbis on Wednesday when he pledged his future to the club.

Despite having said in 1997 he wanted to stay at Marseille for only a year, Courbis said: "It's my second season here and I'm pretty sure I'll be here for a

while... at least five years I changed my mind."

"I have to live up to my reputation — if Courbis doesn't change his mind he would not be Courbis anymore."

A run of poor results since the French winter break — including a shock 1-0 defeat at Toulouse last Sunday — has dented Marseille's once-supreme confidence and

placed a question Mark over their ability to win the race for the French title.

They have now lost two of their last three league matches including a 4-1 thumping at arch-rivals Girondins Bordeaux two weeks ago.

Courbis agreed the second-placed club is facing a mini crisis but said he is still

convinced Marseille can clinch the league title this year.

"It's obvious that we aren't getting along very well together at the moment. But the harder it is the more I want to stay," Courbis said in the French daily L'Equipe.

"We are going to be champions whatever the problems are," he said, "I'm sure of that."

FC Porto rattled by humiliating exit from Portuguese Cup

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — The chairman of reigning league champion and Portuguese Cup holder FC Porto on Wednesday promised changes after its embarrassing home defeat in the fifth round against a minor team.

Torreense, a club from the Second Division B which has a part-time coach, beat FC Porto 1-0 on a late goal in the fifth round against a minor team.

"A lot will have to change, especially attitude," club chairman Jose Pinto Da Costa said, though he said Santos would not be fired.

"We didn't expect this disaster. There's no acceptable justification for it," Pinto Da Costa told reporters. He said the players, who were criticised for being overconfident and sluggish, would have to change their attitude.

FC Porto has won the league title for the past four years.

The humbling result was mitigated by the 2-0 defeat of Benfica, FC Porto's main rival, at Seubal.

Sporting Lisbon, the country's third most powerful club, was knocked out in the previous round, leaving northern club Boavista as favourite to take the title in June.

No young Americans on Formula One horizon — Stewart

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Three-time world champion Jackie Stewart says Formula One, preparing for its debut at the Indianapolis motor speedway next year, would welcome young American drivers to its series.

Unfortunately, Stewart said, he can't name one who might be willing or able to make the switch.

"I don't know who that is right now. I don't see one on the horizon," Stewart said Tuesday after touring the new speedway layout for the U.S. Grand Prix in 2000.

"Jeff Gordon won at Daytona last Sunday," Stewart said referring to the premier event in American stock car racing.

"He's not going to take his bags and run over to the Formula One circuit while he's got himself so well-programmed and established over here."

"Unlike the old days where a few Grand Prix drivers could come over and do Indianapolis, I don't think that can happen any longer. I don't think you're going to see too many Indy-Car dri-

vers being able to switch or even just come over for a year."

That's not happening anymore, either."

The Formula One race at the speedway will be run on a 4-kilometre (2 1/2-mile), 13-turn course using part of the existing track, and the rest snaking through the infield.

Thirty-six pit-side garages with suites above them are being built, along with a new media centre and control tower and a new press box with seating space for 400 writers and 40 television broadcast booths.

The date for the race next year has not been set.

"I was very impressed," the 59-year-old Scotsman said of the speedway renovation. "First of all, there's so much of it already there, the bleachers, the grandstands, the suites. Obviously, the pit area and garage area is going to be totally different, but I've been around the whole circuit and it looks good to me. The design looks good, the viewing facilities will be excellent."

He said the race at Indianapolis would be received well worldwide.

"The Indy 500 has been going since 1911. There's an immense amount of heritage, and history is quite important to the Europeans. They like that. They're going to come and they're going to see a ready-made race track," he said.

"And Indy knows how to put on events of this kind. That is quite an important element."

"We (Formula One) go to some remote areas that have never put a motor race on, for example we're going to go to Malaysia this year. Next year, we're going to go to China. They've never put a motor race on. This is the first time there will be a Formula One race in Indy, but it sure as hell isn't the first time they've run a motor race in Indy."

"I think that Indianapolis as a community can probably service the Formula One Grand Prix better than any new track we would ever go to in the world."



O.J. Simpson's 1968 Heisman trophy is on display before its expected sale at an auction at Butterfield Auction House Tuesday, in Los Angeles' Hollywood district. The Heisman is likely to be the most sought-after of hundreds of Simpson's possessions, including sports memorabilia and art objects, ordered to be sold to help satisfy a civil court judgement won by the families of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. Bids will be taken in person, by phone and by the Internet (AP photo)

CINEMA	TEL:463-4144	CINEMA	TEL:463-4144	CINEMA	TEL:5699238	CINEMA	TEL:5677428	CINEMA	TEL:5934793	CINEMA	TEL:5934793	Elham Yanes Theatre	TEL:4625155
4144		4144		PLAZA		CONCORDE		GALLERIA 1		GALLERIA 2			
Bruce Willis ... in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi ... in		Comedian A'del Emmam ... in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi ... in		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria			
MERCURY RISING		ALWAD MAHROUS TRA' AL WAZIR		AL ZA'EEM		ALWAD MAHROUS TRA' AL WAZIR		THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY		LETHAL WEAPON 4		CLOSED FOR DECORATION	
Shows: 10:30, 8:30, 6:15, 3:30, 12:30		Shows: 10:30, 8:30, 6:15, 3:30, 12:30		Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:30, 9:45		Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30			
						CONCORDE "2" SleepWalkers				MULAN			
						Shows: 3:30, 5:30 only				Shows: 3:30, 5:00			

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Socog rejects Payne criticism

SYDNEY (AP) — Sydney Olympic organising president Michael Knight has rejected criticism of its budget structure by the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) marketing director Michael Payne.

Knight said the IOC had signed off on the controversial deal which handed a risk-free Australian \$100 million (\$65 million) to the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) in exchange for its right to veto Socog board decisions.

The deal has been criticised in Australia because the AOC will receive the money off the top from television rights, regardless of the financial success of the games.

With Sydney about Australian \$200 million (\$130 million) short of its target for sponsorship revenues, Payne suggested the controversial profit deal should be reviewed.

"It would seem the first place to start is to look at the whole profit deal, which we thought was a bad idea in the first place," Payne told the Associated Press. "We would never do a deal of this nature again. Never in a million years."

Knight, who is also the New South Wales state Olympics minister, said the deal was done and Payne should accept that.

"They had to sign the deal, they were party to it," Knight said Wednesday.

"I would have thought that Michael Payne would have had enough on his plate with IOC problems without giving Sydney gratuitous advice."

"I wasn't impressed with his last piece of

advice to U.S. — suggesting the IOC might bring its own Mercedes Benz cars to Sydney when it was suggested that IOC people might be asked to give up their limousines and travel by bus to homebush."

In a deal between Knight, as Olympics minister, and AOC president John Coates, the AOC agreed to give up its veto power over key decisions in exchange for the guaranteed Australian \$100 million (\$65 million).

Although the deal was public from the start, it came under closer scrutiny this month following a current affairs programme which explored the Socog hierarchy.

The AOC is considered the big winner in the deal, with Socog struggling to reach its budget targets.

"I thought (Coates) has been looking after the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) very well and it appears the government's interests have not been as well looked after by the government," said state auditor-general Tony Harris last week.

Coates was asked if he should guarantee the forecast Australian \$130 million profit for taxpayers. "You want me to guarantee it against the 100 million do you? No way," he told the current affairs programme.

"This is the legacy for Australian Olympic sport. This is the one chance to set the AOC up and continue to fund the athletes in our sports at the level we are now doing."

Milwaukee Bucks beat Philadelphia 76ers 93-92

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Glenn Robinson's 18-foot (5.5-metre) jumper with one-tenth of a second remaining gave Milwaukee a come-from-behind 93-92 victory over Philadelphia.

The 76ers led 92-89 on Harvey Grant's layup with 47 seconds remaining in Tuesday night's game before Tyrone Hill's rebound basket brought the Bucks within one. After Allen Iverson missed a driving layup with 19 seconds left, Robinson hit the game-winning shot from the left corner.

Terrell Brandon led

Milwaukee with 15 points, while Iverson scored 23 points for Philadelphia, 17 in the second half.

Cavaliers 90, Magic 78

In Cleveland, Shawn Kemp scored 18 points and Vinny Potaenko, starting for injured center Zydrunas Ilgauskas, had 16 to lead Cleveland to its third straight win, 90-78 over Orlando.

Potaenko scored eight points in the first quarter as Cleveland jumped to a quick 14-2 lead and led by 15 points entering the second quarter.

Derek Strong paced the Magic with 14 points and 10 rebounds.

Nets 97, Pistons 82

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Keith Van Horn scored a career-high 35 points and New Jersey pulled away from Detroit in the second half for a 97-82 victory.

The win snapped New Jersey's three-game losing streak, while the Pistons suffered their fourth straight setback.

Grant Hill scored 22 for Detroit.

Knicks 95, Raptors 85

In New York, Allan Houston scored 20 points as New York spoiled Charles Oakley's return to Madison Square Garden with a 95-85 victory.

Oakley, still upset over the trade that ended his 10-year career in New York, criticised the organisation prior to the game, then stood off to the side and refused to shake hands with any of the Knicks before the opening tipoff as he was warmly welcomed by the crowd.

Oakley had 11 points, seven rebounds and five turnovers for the Raptors, who were led by rookie Vince Carter's 17 points.

Miami 89, Indiana 78

In Indianapolis, P.J. Brown scored a season-high 22 points and Alonzo Mourning added 19 as Miami won its third straight by defeating Indiana 89-78.

Indiana's Reggie Miller was held to 11 points on 4-of-9 shooting and was ejected after being called for two technical fouls in the final



Indiana Pacers' forward Chris Mullin (R) tries to drive around Miami Heat guard Rex Walters (L) during second quarter play on Monday at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis (AFP photo)

2:49. The Pacers were led by Chris Mullin's 16 points. Jordan was off shagging fly balls.

Rockets 109, Suns 92

Hawks 83, Bulls 67

In Chicago, Steve Smith scored 17 points and Alan Henderson added 14 as Atlanta downed Chicago 83-67.

Chicago got 27 points and 10 points from Toni Kukoc, but it wasn't enough to keep the Bulls from dropping to 1-5, their worst start since 1978-79. They've lost four straight at home for the first time since 1993-94, back when a guy named Michael

In Houston, Hakeem Olajuwon had 19 points and 11 rebounds and led a key third-quarter charge as Houston ended Phoenix's nine-game road winning streak with a 109-92 victory. Olajuwon got plenty of help from Scottie Pippen, who had 19 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists. Phoenix had six players in double figures led by Tom Gugliotta and Jason Kidd with 14 each.

Bizarri arrives to relieve Real Madrid goalkeeping woes

MADRID (R) — Argentine under-21 goalkeeper Albano Bizarri will finally arrive in the Spanish capital this weekend to join Real Madrid, club officials said on Wednesday.

Bizarri was signed from Argentine club Real Avellana in January during the Spanish mid-season transfer window, but had been given permission to stay in his native country until now.

His arrival could not be more

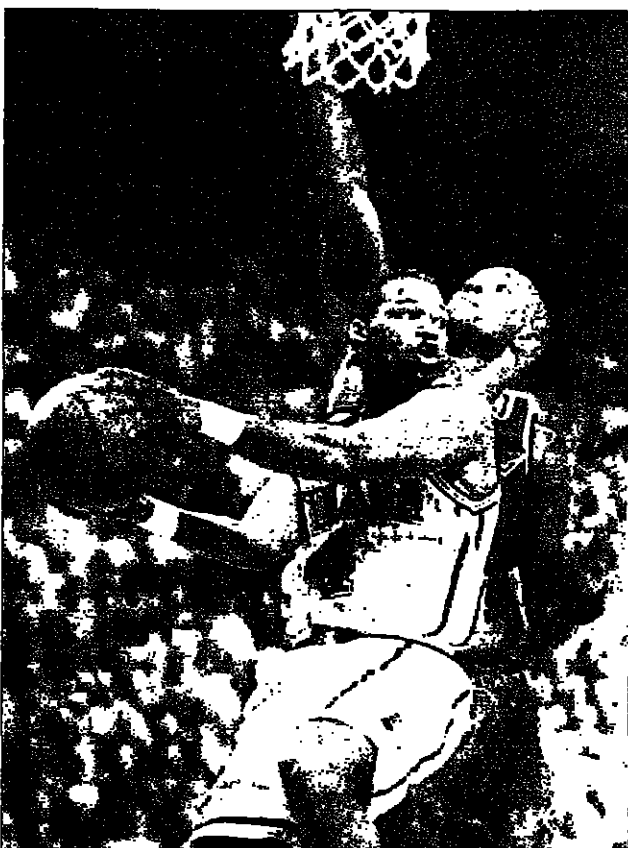
timely as Real Madrid continue to go through a goalkeeping crisis.

Although pencilled in as Real's third-choice keeper, Bizarri may find himself pressed into action sooner than expected.

Bodo Illgner is still struggling to recover from a shoulder injury and a lot of confidence has been lost in the regular second-string Pedro Conteras following the 3-0 defeat at Barcelona on Sunday.

Goalkeeping cover at the European champions has been stretched to the limit this season.

Injuries to Conteras during the first half of the season meant that reserve team goalkeeper Eduardo Alvarado and even Real Madrid's 17-year-old third team goalkeeper Iker Casillas, who is still at school, were required to sit on the bench for various league and cup matches, although neither was pressed into service.



Indiana Pacers' guard Travis Best (4) looks to pass the ball off after going to the hoop with Miami Heat center Alonzo Mourning (33) during second quarter play on Monday at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis (AFP photo)

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Tottenham defeats Wimbledon in League Cup semifinal

LONDON (AP) — Tottenham, with a goal by Steffen Iversen in 39th minute, defeated Wimbledon 1-0 Tuesday to reach the finals of England's League Cup. The other finalist was to come from Wednesday's Sunderland-Leicester second-leg semifinal. Tottenham, after a 0-0 match in the first leg, got the winner as Iversen — with the ball falling to him near the corner of the penalty area — put in a perfect chip shot from about 25 metres (yards) that hit the upper corner of the net. Wimbledon, reaching the League Cup semifinals for the second time in the three seasons — losing both times — has now gone five matches without a goal.

Effenberg backs plan for biennial World Cup

MUNICH (R) — Former German International Stefan Effenberg said on Wednesday the European championship could be abolished in favour of staging the World Cup every two years. "In practice that would mean a break for one year, then the World Cup the next year," the 30-year-old Bayern Munich midfielder told the Sid agency. Effenberg said that introducing a World Cup every two years would be great for spectators. "If you have to choose between the European championship and the World Cup — ask the fans. They prefer the World Cup. It's also more attractive for players," he said. The prospect of a biennial World Cup was raised last month by FIFA president Sepp Blatter, who caused uproar in the soccer world last month with his controversial proposal.

Satoya, Lahtela win season's penultimate moguls titles

JAPAN (AP) — Olympic champion Tae Satoya of Japan won her first freestyle World Cup moguls title of the season Wednesday, performing a flawless run through the bumps with acrobatic mid-air spins and a perfect landing. The world cup points leader Marja Elfman of Sweden placed second, followed by Michelle Roark of the United States. With just one race left this weekend in Madarao, also in northern Japan, Elfman leads the standings with 288 points, or 12 points ahead of Roark's 276. American Ann Battelle, who finished fourth, lies eight points behind Roark with 268. It was Satoya's second career World Cup event title. In the men's event, Janne Lahtela of Finland edged Stephane Rochon of Canada, surging ahead of Finland's Lauri Lassila to lead the standings with 276 points. American Caleb Martin won the bronze medal. Lassila, who finished fifth, lies eight points behind Lahtela at 268. Canadian Jean-Luc Brassard, who placed 11th, has amassed 258 points to stand in third place in the overall standings. The event in Madarao will also be the fifth and last leg in the men's World Cup circuit.

Finidi George to stay at Real Betis until 2004

SEVILLE, Spain (R) — Nigerian international Finidi George has extended his contract with Spain's Real Betis for another three years, and will stay in Seville until 2004, the club announced on Wednesday. No financial details were released of the deal that will keep the player at the club until he is 33-years-old. The striker has become one of the most popular players at the club since his arrival in 1996 from Ajax Amsterdam.



Franz Beckenbauer, president of the German soccer club Bayern Munich and vice president of the German Soccer Federation meets young Qatari player Qatari on Monday in Doha. Beckenbauer gave his support to the idea of FIFA President Joseph Blatter to hold the World Cup every two years and defended the right of his country to organise Mondial 2006 (AFP photo)

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Jeter beats Yankees, gets \$5m

NEW YORK (AP) — Derek Jeter became the first baseball player this year to beat a club in salary arbitration when he was awarded \$5 million on Tuesday.

A day after hearing arguments at Tampa, Florida, the three-man panel rejected the New York Yankees' offer of \$3.2 million to the all-star shortstop.

Jeter matched Ruben Sierra's 1992 salary with Texas as the second-highest ever awarded in arbitration. The only higher award is the \$5.3 million pitcher Jack McDowell got from the Chicago White Sox in 1994 — when he lost his case.

Jeter, who made \$750,000 last year, was eligible for arbitration for the first time. The case was decided by arbitrators Nicholas Zumas, IRA Jaffe and Gil Vernon.

When Bernie Williams became a free agent last autumn, he said that anger from his 1996 arbitration hearing lingered. Williams, the last Yankee to go to a hearing before Jeter, nearly signed with Boston but instead stayed with New York, agreeing to an \$87.5 million, seven-year contract.

Jeter, 24, is eligible for free agency after the 2001 season, one year after Seattle shortstop Alex Rodriguez becomes eligible, which could lead to a record deal.

Jeter hit .324 last season with 19 homers, 84 RBIs and 30 steals. He was fifth in the American league in batting average and first in runs with 127.

Owners had won the first five hearings this year, defeating Montreal infielder Shane Andrews, Boston outfielder Midre Cummings, Kansas City outfielder Johnny Damon, Los Angeles shortstop Mark Grudzielanek and Detroit outfielder Brian Hunter.

New York Mets reliever Armando Benitez, scheduled for a hearing Tuesday, agreed to a one-year contract worth \$1,987,500, up from \$1.1 million last year. The settlement was halfway between the \$2.4 million he had sought and the \$1,575,000 the Mets had offered.

Benitez, on training from Baltimore during the offseason, with 5-6 with a 3.82 era and 22 saves for the Orioles last season.

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Barak's 'One Israel' image bombs on prime time TV

TEL AVIV (R) — Opposition Labour leader Ehud Barak's "One Israel" election pitch was in chaos on Wednesday after an angry tirade against racism in the party by an offended lawmaker at a rally shown live on prime time television.

Addisu Messele, Israel's only Ethiopian member of parliament, hijacked Tuesday night's rally, conceived as a celebration of unity, after he failed to secure a safe slot on Labour's list of candidates for the May 17 general election.

He grabbed the podium microphone from an embarrassed Barak and, with the audience in uproar, launched a bitter assault on what he said was racism and elitism in the party.

"It looked like a jungle yesterday," Barak's spokeswoman, Aliza Goren, said of the debacle. She defended Barak from charges of racism and suggested Messele was a poor loser.

Messele had expected to

win the highest place reserved on Labour's list for new immigrants but lost it to a Russian-born woman, Sofia Landver, when the results of party primaries were officially announced at the rally.

Messele accused party managers of rigging the ballot to ensure a plum spot for Landver so as to boost Labour's electoral appeal. Israel is home to some 700,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union while Ethiopian Jews number only 75,000.

To make matters worse, an Arab woman who also fared badly in the primaries, Nadia Hilu, followed Messele to the stage to brand the voting system "a joke."

Few commentators lent credence on Wednesday to Messele's allegation of ballot fraud and Barak promised it would be fully investigated to clear it from the table.

But political analysts said Barak's painstaking efforts to portray Labour as a home for all Israelis regardless of

their origins had suffered a severe setback and that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would benefit handsomely.

"To permit such a fiasco takes some talent," commentator Nahum Barnea wrote in Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper. He called the rally a "show of collective suicide."

Opinion polls show Barak running neck-and-neck with Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing Likud Party, in the build-up to the May election.

Netanyahu was quick to revel in Labour's woes, saying his rivals seemed bent on self-destruction.

"The Labour Party's campaign was supposed to project unity. It has become a party that divides the people rather than unites it," he told army radio.

Israel's political landscape has fragmented into a patchwork of interest groups under a system introduced for the 1996 election that gives voters one ballot for a party and a second to choose

their prime minister.

Two large groups — immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Sephardic Jews with origins in Arab countries — will be key to victory or defeat in the forthcoming election.

Labour's roots are with Ashkenazic Jews from Europe who founded Israel and long enjoyed privileges and influence largely denied to the more disadvantaged Sephardim.

Barak has sought forgiveness from Sephardim for the wrongs of past Labour governments but the party scored an own goal last year when one of its lawmakers, Ori Orr, accused the Sephardim of lacking the "curiosity to know what is going on around them."

Orr was way down Labour's list for the May election with almost no chance of re-entering parliament.

Moroccan-born Shlomo Ben-Ami topped the primaries but some commentators said his success had been overshadowed by Messele's outburst.



CANADIAN SNOW SCULPTURE CONTEST: A man is dwarfed Wednesday by giant snow sculptures on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. It is the second year of the sculpting competition on the lawn of the Canadian parliament as part of the Winterlude celebrations. Thousands of visitors come to see results of the competition between teams from each province and territory (Reuters photo)

Annan to send Lockerbie letter to Libya

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Secretary General Kofi Annan said he was sending a letter to Libya on Wednesday with clarification about arrangements for the trial of two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland.

"I am going to be sending them a letter but obviously I cannot discuss with you what is in the letter," he told reporters on his arrival at U.N. headquarters.

Asked if he had discussed the contents with the United States and Britain, as well as Libya, he replied, "I hope the letter will be acceptable to all of them... We have offered clarification and answered some of their [the Libyans'] questions and I hope that the understandings contained in the letter

will be sufficient for us to move forward."

At issue is the handing over by Libya of trial before a Scottish court in the Netherlands of two suspects in the December 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over the Scottish village of Lockerbie in which 270 people were killed, including 11 on the ground.

Libya confirmed over the weekend that it was willing to extradite the two alleged intelligence agents for trial but it first requested certain written assurances.

Diplomats told Reuters on Tuesday Annan was proposing, with U.S. and British agreement, that Scottish prosecutors should not attempt to undermine the Libyan government.

"The prosecution team cannot have as its objective

to get at the Libyan regime," said one envoy close to the talks, but added the trial would still need to delve into the motives behind the bombing.

Annan was also expected to tell Libya U.N. monitors could ensure the suspects — Abdul Basset Ali Mohammed Al Megrahi and Lamien Khalifa Fhimah — would not be interrogated by British or American security services.

If convicted, they would have the right to appeal to a similar Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands and, if they lost their appeal, would have regular access to Libyan consular services while serving their sentence at Barlinnie jail, near Glasgow.

South Africa and Saudi Arabia, which sent envoys

to Tripoli to persuade Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to hand over the two men, said on Saturday agreement had been reached.

Tripoli had apparently removed the chief remaining stumbling block and agreed that the two should serve any jail sentences in Scotland and not in Libya.

The Security Council imposed sanctions on Libya in 1992 and toughened them in 1993 because of its failure to extradite the suspects to Britain or the United States for trial.

But London, Washington and August 1998 dropped their insistence that the trial take place in either country and challenged Libya to make good on its repeated offer to allow them to be tried before a Scottish court in the Netherlands.

Khamenei calls for anti-U.S. demonstrations during Haj

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran's supreme leader urged Muslims on Wednesday to demonstrate against the United States during the annual Muslim pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, Iranian radio reported.

In past years, the Iranian government has insisted on holding the protests, known as the "disavowal of infidels" ceremony, during the pilgrimage, or Haj, to denounce the United States and Israel.

In 1987, the rally led to clashes with Saudi security forces in which 402 pilgrims,

mostly Iranians, were killed. Rallies in the past two years, however, have ended without incident.

"Unity and resistance of Muslims against enemies and disavowal of infidels, headed by America and the cancerous tumor of Zionism [Israel], are the most important duties and political messages of Muslims during the Haj," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was quoted as saying during a meeting with Iranian pilgrim officials.

Iran, which is overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim, often criticizes Saudi Arabia for its close ties with the West, particularly the United States. Most Saudis, including the Kingdom's ruling Al Saud family, belong to Islam's mainstream Sunni sect.

Since the election of moderate President Mohammad Khatami, Iran has improved relations with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf neighbors.

Saudi Arabia bans demonstrations during the pilgrimage. But in recent years, the government has tolerated low-key rallies held by Iranians inside the area where they camp.

Arafat quoted saying he may delay declaring state

RAMALLAH (R) — Yasser Arafat has told a group of Palestinians that he is studying whether to postpone plans to declare an independent Palestinian state in May, a member of the group said on Wednesday.

Qais Abdul Karim, of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), said the Palestinian leader told senior DFLP officials on Monday that any delay would be in return for international guarantees of recognition of a future state.

"During the discussion, Abu Annan [Arafat] referred to some proposals that are being floated to possibly delay the declaration of the state for a certain period of time in return for American, European and Arab guarantees, such as a conditional delay in return for recognition of the state when it is declared,"

Abdul Karim told Reuters.

"Abu Annan said the issue of declaration of the state must be studied carefully and that all the elements that affect it should be examined and carefully calculated," he said.

Abdul Karim, better known as Abu Laila, is a member of the DFLP politburo and was in the group that met Arafat in the West Bank.

The movement, which is part of the PLO and based in Damascus, opposes the Oslo interim peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Arafat has in the past said he would declare a state on May 4, the end of a five-year period for negotiating a final peace under the Oslo process.

He has faced mounting international pressure not to make such a unilateral declaration, particularly in the run-up to an early general election in Israel

on May 17.

Israel's right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu froze peace deals two months ago and is campaigning for reelection on a platform that opposes Palestinian statehood.

A senior member of Israel's opposition Labour Party, Yossi Beilin, said he had advised Arafat to extend the interim period to Jan. 1, 2000, hoping by then that a new Labour government would be able to conclude a permanent peace settlement.

"If we don't, it doesn't mean that Israel would recognise a Palestinian state if Arafat declares it then," Beilin said.

"I know Arafat prefers to declare a state after he concludes an agreement. He knows that nothing will happen by May so it will be best to delay, and I know it will be a big concession for Arafat," he said.

New Mars images disclose more secrets

LONDON (R) — Scientists are closer to piecing together a view of the early climate on Mars that could help answer the question of whether life existed on the red planet.

The latest images from the Mars global surveyor mission, currently orbiting Mars, show evidence of volcanoes, wind and valley formations created by a groundwater source of flowing water, researchers said on Wednesday.

In letters published in the science journal, Nature, the researchers said high-resolution pictures from the Mars Orbiter camera, 20-40 times better than previous images, suggest Mars was not always the cold, dry planet it is today.

"The images being acquired by the Mars Orbiter camera support an origin of the valley networks by fluid erosion: the

nature of the landforms suggest that this fluid was water. In most cases the source appears to have been groundwater," said Michael Malin and Michael Carr of the U.S. Geological Survey.

The scientists also found layering in the 4,000-km long valleys, mariners canyon system, indicating volcanic activity in the first billion years of the planet.

"The groundwater observation was a real home run. It was fairly definitive," Maria Zuber, a geophysicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who evaluated all the research, said in a telephone interview.

"It's very clear that these features had a groundwater source," she said, adding that the conditions were favourable for the development of life but

did not prove it.

In another letter, William Hartmann and colleagues from the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson, Arizona, said detailed mapping of the age of the different regions suggests that volcanic activity was a continuing process on the planet.

Like groundwater, volcanoes are important because they melt ice into the water which supports life. They also release gases which could have warmed up the planet.

"What the observations do is place early Mars in a better framework that is better understood. Ultimately before we figure out whether life ever existed we must have a better knowledge of the state of the planet at a particular time. That is what these observations are starting to provide," Zuber said.

Turk army enters north Iraq hunting Kurd rebels

ANKARA (R) — Turkish forces have advanced into the Kurdish-held enclave of northern Iraq in a thrust designed to strike at guerrillas of jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan, Turkish military officials said on Wednesday.

"It is a small-scale operation against the terrorists," a spokesman for Turkey's general staff told Reuters.

He gave no indication of the size of the incursion but said it "would not last long." Previous operations have lasted less than a month.

Turkish forces fighting Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) maintain a presence in

mountainous northern Iraq and are periodically reinforced when Ankara decides to stage an offensive.

The cross-border strike appeared designed to profit from any demoralising effect Ocalan's arrest might have among rebels in the mountainous enclave.

Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit denied any link between the incursion and Turkey's dramatic detention of Ocalan, known as "Apo."

"It is not related to the recent arrest of Apo," Ecevit told the NTV television channel.

"In recent years the Turkish army has seen the need to carry

out operations in northern Iraq to deny bases to the rebels. This operation in no different to those," he said.

Since Ocalan's capture Ecevit has called on PKK guerrillas to surrender and take advantage of an amnesty programme.

Witnesses at Turkey's Habur border gate with Iraq said around 3,000 to 4,000 troops together with armoured vehicles had crossed over in the last few days.

Border officials said the offensive was aimed at a series of Kurd rebel bases strung along the mountainous border region, outside Baghdad's direct control since after the

1991 Gulf War.

Previous cross-border operations have combined air attacks by U.S.-made Cobra strike helicopters with armoured vehicles entering from Turkey. Sikorsky carrier helicopters land platoons of soldiers on mountain peaks to flush the rebels out.

The PKK, greatly weakened inside Turkey except for a few mountain strongholds, uses northern Iraq as a base for strikes into Turkey in its campaign for self rule in the mainly-Kurdish southeast.

More than 29,000 rebels, troops, militiamen and civilians have died in 14 years of fighting between the PKK and Turkish

forces. Regional analysts said the arrest of Ocalan could bring an end to the armed campaign for Kurdish autonomy.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz visited Turkey early this week in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade Ankara to end the mandate of a U.S.-led air force that patrols the no-fly zone over northern Iraq from southern Turkey.

The region's mountains and deep valleys are controlled by two rival Kurdish factions who recently reached a U.S.-sponsored peace accord under which they pledged to prevent the PKK from setting up camps in their territory.

Ocalan trial stands to highlight issue of minority rights

By Waleed M. Sadi

NOW THAT Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan has been captured, this could become the trial of the century because of the far-reaching issues that will be tested and tried with him. The earliest part of Ocalan's trial could be the judgement of his "terrorist" policies and activities, even though the world has yet to offer a legal and binding definition of terrorism in a straightforward way and make it a crime against humanity.

When the U.N. Diplomatic Conference on the establishment of an International Criminal Court concluded its work in Rome on July 17, 1998 with the adoption of the statute of the court, it failed to include the crime of terrorism in the list of crimes punishable by the court simply because there is no international consensus on what constitutes terrorism in legal terms. Many delegations then wanted to exclude acts of violence perpetrated in the course of "wars of liberation" from subjugation, occupation or colonialism from the scope of punishable terrorism. Short of a universal agreement of what constitutes terrorism, the prosecution and conviction of "terrorists" became elusive.

Having said that, the other issues that would have to be raised in the trial of Ocalan could be even harder to prosecute and convict or exonerate. The underlying broader issue in the expected trial is the

right of a minority to seek secession from the state in which it is a part. Under acceptable international norms, minorities in a country have cultural, religious, economic and social rights but no right to seek secession. This is the rule of thumb that is well enshrined in several interna-

COMMENTARY

tionally-binding human rights conventions. The issue becomes more complex when we start dealing with sizeable minorities such as the case of Kurds in Turkey or the Quebecois in Canada. According to binding international standards, sizeable minorities have indeed a political right to secede and form their own state provided this right is pursued democratically and not through the barrel of the gun. That means the conduct of a referendum in a free and democratic way as the basis for the exercise of the right to self-determination.

The added complication in the case of the Kurds in Turkey is the fact that they are scattered all over the country and are not confined to one geographic region. The French Canadians are situated in one particular province, Quebec, and their quest for independence from Canada is clearly less complicated. Even in the case of the Quebecois, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that they cannot withdraw from the Canadian

federation in a non-constitutional manner. In other words, any attempt on the part of Quebec to separate must be in accordance with the federal laws of Canada and pursued and attained legally. Another complication for the cause of the Kurds in Turkey is Ankara's postulate that Kurdish nationality has no ethnic or religious connotations and encompasses many races, religions, cultural and ethnic groups. To hear Turkish officials describe the Turkish nationality, it corresponds to the American nationality where all races, colours, religions and ethnic groups combine to form the American nationality. Many Turkish Kurds have fully assimilated and become part of the establishment. The absence of high-ranking Kurdish officers in the military is the only noticeable exception. Under this explanation, to be a Turk does not mean any particular ethnic group and therefore the Kurds are just as Turk as any other group such as the Laz, Circassians, Armenians or Arabs.

Iraq has dealt with its Kurdish people in an enlightened manner. It amended the constitution and explicitly stated that Iraq is composed of Arabs and Kurds. In other words, Baghdad has accepted the fact that it is a bi-national state. The Iraqi approach offers yet another approach to the issue of sizeable minorities.

If Turkey is a multi-ethnic state as indeed it is, then it follows that

this multi-ethnicity should find expression on several fronts, especially cultural. Ankara is reluctant to go this far for fear that granting its Kurdish people complete cultural rights would undermine the unity of the country and promote a Kurdish national consciousness.

But Ankara cannot have its cake and eat it too. As long as it maintains that the Turkish state is a multi-cultural phenomenon, it must deliver on this assertion and grant its Kurdish people the full right to speak their language and exercise all their cultural rights. This could very well mean making the Kurdish language the second official language for the country. Arabic is an official language in Israel, although the Israeli Arabs are less than 20 per cent of the total population. Ankara can and should be prepared to take bold decisions on several fronts to lend support to its thesis that it is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nation.

The ball is indeed in Ankara's court, having failed to move effectively and assertively in the direction of ethnic reconciliation. Until Ankara picks up the ball and articulates a clearer vision about its nature and composition, the capture and trial of Ocalan cannot end terrorism or stop the bleeding in the Turkish psyche. These basic issues must, therefore, have their days in court as well when Ocalan is tried, because their airing and resolution form indispensable parts of the historic trial.

'Syria, U.S. end dispute over embassy attack'

CAIRO (AP) — Syria and the United States have ended a dispute over the storming of the American embassy and ambassador's residence by hundreds of demonstrators angry at the U.S.-British attack on Iraq in December, Arab diplomats said Wednesday.

Under the agreement, reached this week, Syria has apologised to the United States for the Dec. 19 incident. Syria will also pay a \$500,000 to cover damages at the two buildings, said the diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The protesters forced their way into the ambassador's residence and embassy compound, throwing rocks and ripping down the American flag. The ambassador's residence was said to be extensively damaged.

Syrian security failed to stop the riots, but no one was hurt.

Demonstrations without official approval are extremely rare in Syria. Shortly after the attack, the U.S. State Department issued an advisory warning Americans not to travel to Syria, and some consular services were closed.

The Syrian government apologised for the incident and promised tighter security around the two buildings.

The dispute seemed to flare again last week when Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass described the rioters as "brave youth whose actions dealt a slap to the United States." His remarks to the government-owned Tishrin newspaper drew an official protest from the United States and two days later Tlass issued an statement saying he was misquoted.

The United States threatened to recall its ambassador if the Syrian government did not apologise, the diplomats said.

King issues motorcade

Volume 24 Number

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